



NELSON

C. COUSENS, after CHARLES GRIGNON  
NAPLES, 1798

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A SON  
OF  
**MOTHER INDIA**  
ANSWERS

CASTE AND OUTCAST  
MY BROTHER'S FACE  
THE SECRET LISTENERS OF THE EAST  
THE FACE OF SILENCE

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*Stories for Children*  
KARI THE ELEPHANT  
JUNGLE BEASTS AND MEN  
HARI THE JUNGLE LAD  
GAY-NECK

# A SON OF MOTHER INDIA ANSWERS

BY

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

*Author of "My Brother's Face,"  
"Caste and Outcast," etc.*



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GAJALAKSHMI  
THARAILI, STATE:

TO  
**MR. & MRS. SAMUEL FELS**

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1798.	Aug. 1st.	Battle of the Nile.
		Created Baron Nelson of the Nile.
	Dec.	Evacuates the royal family from Naples.
1799.	July.	Restores Ferdinand IV as King of Naples.
	Aug. 13th.	Created Duke of Brontë in Sicily.
1800.	Feb. 18th.	Captures the <i>Généreux</i> .
	Nov.	Lands in England.
1801.	Jan. 1st.	Promoted to Vice- Admiral.
	Jan. 29th.	Birth of Horatia.
	April 2nd.	Battle of Copenhagen.
		Created a Viscount.
	Aug. 16th.	Attacks Boulogne.
	Oct.	Goes to live at Merton.
1803.	April 6th.	Death of Sir William Hamilton.
1803.	July— April, 1805.	Blockades Toulon.
1805.	May—July.	Pursues Villeneuve.
	Aug. 19th.	Lands in England, on leave.
	Sept. 29th.	Assumes command off Cadiz.
	Oct. 21st.	Battle of Trafalgar.

## PREFACE

AFTER I had written my answer to Miss Mayo it occurred to me that my book would need a preface which should contain the following: "The writer who essays to criticize such a book as 'Mother India' labors under an important disadvantage which should be noted. Denials and doubts are cold. The original author, having a positive thesis to advance, makes affirmations, and may illustrate them with every available sort of instance or supposed instance; he or she can be concrete and picturesque. But the critic's position, especially in such an instance as the present one, does not allow of pictorial qualities.

"In order to give added life and vim, two obvious courses are open. One is to say *Tu quoque!* There are horrible products of Western civilisation which might be thrown in the teeth of the traducer of the East—the abject slums of this industrial nation, the appalling white slavery of that. And so on. The other course would be to lighten up

one's reply with invective—and invective, shrewdly used, can be very telling.

"But it has seemed to me that to use either weapon against Miss Mayo could give but a passing and unreal advantage. And, besides, I think it is not my way. If I have tried to be temperate (though it has not always been easy) in this little book, and if I have avoided the temptation to build up a competing scene, it is because, first, two uses of a wrong method do not create a right one; and, besides, the weaknesses of Miss Mayo's case surely need only to be calmly indicated in order to make them plain; and then, second, because it ought not to be the way of India to reply in kind. Ancient and immemorial faith in gentleness, such as our seers and prophets have preached and practised, should make us as sweetly reasonable, as ready to admit the possible worthiness even of an unjust chastiser's motives, as hurt feelings and profaned sanctities can allow."

D. G. M.

A SON  
OF  
MOTHER INDIA  
ANSWERS

*Man animates all he can and sees only that  
which he animates.—Emerson.*

the Navy Board, a body of commissioners working under the Admiralty and responsible for the whole administrative work of the Navy.

After six months of dull convoy work Nelson passed his examination for Lieutenant, though technically he should have waited till the age of twenty. Next day he was appointed to the *Lowestoft*, "a fine frigate," commanded by Captain William Locker, an able protégé of Lord Hawke's. The ship was ordered to the West Indies on account of the outbreak of the American War of Independence, but as yet there was little fighting and the work consisted mainly of chasing French and American privateers. Nelson was given the command of the *Lowestoft's* tender, a schooner, and very soon made himself an expert pilot for the north side of Hispaniola.

In July, 1778, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Peter Parker, took Nelson into his flagship as Third Lieutenant, a delicate attention to the Comptroller; and nature, in the shape of the West Indian climate, soon brought him to the post of First Lieutenant, "by succession." In December, Parker made Nelson Commander of the *Badger* brig and sent him to chivvy privateers on the coast of Honduras. On 11th June, 1779, Parker used his local powers to promote Nelson to be Post-Captain of the *Hinchinbrooke* frigate (twenty-eight guns), though he was not yet twenty-one. Doubtless Nelson had shown himself to have the makings of an excellent officer, but such promotion was unparalleled, except in the case of those who possessed considerable influence. Advancement in the public service, during the eighteenth century, depended largely

on "ties of blood and friendship" and other "marks of favour and esteem," and Nelson was of the lucky ones, especially when it is remembered that he served much of his sea time during peace, when employment of any sort was most difficult to obtain. Quite apart from this, he had received an excellent professional training, having been well grounded in navigation and seamanship and having visited the East Indies, West Indies and Arctic under captains specially chosen for him by his uncle. He had so far been in "happy ships" and had thus escaped the petty quarrels born of arrogance, incompetence and discontent, so prevalent in the Navy of the eighteenth century.

When once promoted to the "post-list," an officer of Nelson's time, if young enough, could look forward with some certainty to becoming a flag officer, provided that his life and health were spared, since promotion to the flag-list was by seniority on the captains' list. Should the Admiralty wish to advance a particular captain to flag rank, all captains senior to him had also to be promoted and automatically retired. When Nelson eventually received his flag his immediate senior on the list was twenty-four years older than himself.

Captain Suckling having already died before his promotion, Nelson was left to make his career unaided, the Walpole influence being now on the decline. France and Spain had joined the war and Nelson was kept busy for a time in organising the defences of Port Royal, Jamaica, against a threatened attack by d'Estaing, until the *Hinchinbrooke* came in from a cruise, when he took her to sea and captured four prizes.

In January, 1780, he had his first experience of real warfare, being appointed senior naval officer on a joint expedition against the Spanish settlement on Lake Nicaragua. The expedition, which included 400 troops, was badly organised at its base and did not begin the ascent of the San Juan River till April, when the rainy season had already started. Rodney's fleet in the West Indies in that very same year lost one man in eight from sickness, while three in every hundred were invalided home as physical wrecks. Nor was this experience so very unusual. Nelson's troubles were far worse, since his men had to perform the unhealthy task of forcing their boats through tropical forests amidst tropical downpours. They were soon attacked by malaria and dysentery, but, nevertheless, captured Fort San Juan, their principal objective, although they had not enough fit men to hold it, and the *Hinch-ingbrooke* is said to have lost ninety-five per cent of her crew on this enterprise. Nelson was luckily recalled the day before the fort fell, in order to take command of the *Janus* at Jamaica, whose captain had recently died. He had exerted himself most strenuously in the expedition, having laid many of the guns which fired on the fort with his own hand, and he reached Jamaica suffering from dysentery and in a critical condition. Naturally he was unable to take command of his new ship and, after being personally nursed by Lady Parker, was invalided home in the *Lion*, commanded by Captain the Hon. William Cornwallis, "whose care and attention," he afterwards wrote, "again saved my life."

## CHAPTER II

### THE WEST INDIES

Ill at Bath — commissions the *Alcmarle* — method of command — North America — meets Hood and Prince William — seamen's pay — visits France — commissions the *Boreas* — West Indies — illicit trade — Hughes and the Navigation Laws — Commissioner Moutray — seizes American ships — meets Frances Nisbet — becomes engaged — discovers further malpractices — marries — returns home.

NELSON landed at Portsmouth in November 1780, and soon retired to Bath, where he remained in a miserable condition for three months. "I have been so ill since I have been here," he wrote to Locker in January 1781, "that I was obliged to be carried to and from bed, with the most excruciating tortures, but, thank God, I am now upon the mending hand." Even so, he still complained of the partial paralysis of his left arm, and in March came to London and stayed with his other uncle, William Suckling, who had an appointment in the Custom House. By May he was worse again and complained that "I have entirely lost the use of my left arm, and very near of my left leg also and thigh." Nevertheless, he appears to have looked upon himself as dedicated to sea life and applied to the Admiralty for employment.

Although Nelson had seen little of it so far, the American War had now reached a critical phase, France, Spain and the Dutch being also involved in it. Employment afloat was, therefore, easier to obtain, and, in August, Nelson was given the

*Altamarle* frigate, a converted French merchantman, and was childishly delighted with his command. "The Admiralty have been very civil," he wrote to his brother William, "having given me the choice of all my officers, which I am much pleased with. . . . My quarter-deck is filled, much to my satisfaction, with very genteel young men and seamen. . . . Not a man or officer in her I would wish to change. . . . They are, in my opinion, as good a set of men as ever I saw."

This enthusiasm soon became typical of his attitude towards all naval personnel over whom he exercised command. In his treatment of his officers and crews he combined an almost pastoral solicitude, reminiscent of generations of clerical Nelsons, with the grand manner of aristocratic leadership derived from the Sucklings and Walpoles. Moreover, he occupied a position in the service usually assumed for the first time by men nearly twice his age. He came to it with none of the cynical harshness and caution born of a long career of snubs, intrigues, quarrels and servilities, but with all the impetuous ardour of a brilliant young man who expected to be cheerfully obeyed by his crew. He had no professional sense of distrust and none of that desire to requite early snubs which was then so common amongst senior officers. He was prepared to break through that austere service isolation which still surrounds the captain of a ship of war, and to use with all the vigour and ingenuity of youth those powers which so seldom came to any but those already set in their ways and fast bound by professional routine.

Nelson's enthusiasm for the personnel and

material of his new command was severely tested by his being ordered on convoy work, "and, it would almost be supposed, to try my constitution, was kept the whole winter in the North Sea." After a voyage to Elsinore which gave him some useful experience in the navigation of the entrance to the Baltic, he returned to the Downs and was ordered to Portsmouth, possibly for inclusion in Sir Richard Bickerton's squadron fitting out for the East Indies. But on 26th January, 1782, the *Albemarle* was nearly driven on the Goodwin Sands as a result of a collision with an East Indian store ship during a bad gale, and, by the time she was refitted, Bickerton had sailed and Nelson was ordered to pick up a convoy at Cork and carry it to Quebec, "where, worse than all to tell, I understand I am to winter."

The *Albemarle* reached the St. Lawrence in July, Nelson standing the voyage better than he expected, but while on a cruise shortly afterwards he was attacked by scurvy, the dreaded deficiency disease of the Navy, the ship's officers having eaten salt beef for eight weeks and the crew for twenty. While at Quebec he met Alexander Davison, his future prize-agent and man of business, who claimed to have dissuaded Nelson from making a proposal of marriage to Mary Simpson (aged sixteen), daughter of the Provost-Marshal of the Garrison, when about to sail for New York. Here Nelson found Lord Hood, fresh from the Battle of the Saints, with Prince William Henry (later William IV) as one of his midshipmen, who described Nelson's first appearance as follows : "He had on a full-laced uniform ; his lank, unpowdered hair was tied in a stiff Hessian tail,

of an extraordinary length ; the old-fashioned flaps of his waistcoat added to the general quaintness of his figure and produced an appearance which particularly attracted my notice ; for I had never seen anything like it before, nor could I imagine who he was, nor what he came about. My doubts were, however, removed when Lord Hood introduced me to him. There was something irresistibly pleasing in his address and conversation ; and an enthusiasm when speaking on professional subjects that showed he was no common being."

In this sincere and artless description, written without the aid of modern psychology, we recognise two attributes of genius—personal magnetism and the manic drive.

Admiral Digby, Commander-in-Chief at New York, had greeted Nelson on his first arrival by saying, " You are come on a fine station for making prize-money." This was so obviously kindly meant that he must have been somewhat chilled by Nelson's famous reply, " Yes, sir, but the West Indies is the station for honour." Nelson now took a bold step. On the strength of only a few days' acquaintance he applied to Hood for patronage and through Digby's courtesy was allowed to accompany the fleet to the West Indies. They arrived in December, and much to Nelson's disappointment, peace negotiations had already begun and no major operations were attempted by either side, so that he had to be content with commanding an unsuccessful attack on Turk's Island, San Domingo. But he was much praised by Hood, who recommended him to the Prince as being able to give " as much

information as any officer in the fleet " on naval tactics. His knowledge, however, at this time must have been mainly theoretical.

The *Albemarle* was ordered home in May, 1783, and reached Portsmouth in June. Nelson spent the next few weeks " in attempting to get the wages due to my *good fellows*, for various ships they Served in the war. The disgust of the Seamen to the Navy is all owing to the infernal plan of turning them over from Ship to Ship, so that Men cannot be attached to their Officers, or the Officers care two-pence about them. My ship was paid off last week : and in such a manner that must flatter any Officer, in particular in these turbulent times. The whole Ship's company offered, if I could get a Ship, to enter for her immediately."

In October, Nelson applied for six months' leave and went to France, where he stayed at St. Omer in company with an old shipmate, Captain James Macnamara, in order to study the French language. Here he met " an English clergyman, a Mr. Andrews, who has two very beautiful young ladies, daughters. I must take care of my heart, I assure you." One of the daughters was soon described as " very beautiful," " the most accomplished woman my eyes ever beheld." By January, 1784, he was begging William Suckling to allow him £100 on which to marry, but, although Suckling appears to have agreed, the whole project fell through, for reasons never properly explained, and in a few days Nelson was back in London and asking for a ship. In March, despite the peace, he was appointed through Hood's patronage to the *Boreas* frigate,

then fitting out for the West Indies. The start of the voyage was unfortunate, "the damned Pilot" running the ship aground. There was further trouble in the Downs with a Dutch East Indiaman, in which some British subjects were detained, and at Portsmouth, where Nelson went for a ride and was run away with and thrown.

Nelson was forced to give a passage out to Lady Hughes, the wife of his future Commander-in-Chief, and her family, whom he described as being "an incredible expense" and having "an eternal clack." "This station is far from a pleasant one," he wrote to Locker soon after his arrival, "the Admiral [Sir Richard Hughes] and all about him are great ninnies." "Was it not for Mrs. Moutray [wife of the Commissioner of the Navy at Antigua], who is *very, very* good to me, I should almost hang myself at this infernal hole."

Filled with pride, however, at his fine ship and his excellent officers and crew, including a picked batch of midshipmen whom he had been carefully training on the voyage out, Nelson decided to devote himself solely to doing his "duty," an ominous phrase and one often on his lips. An opportunity presented itself almost immediately. The West Indian Islands during the eighteenth century were of the highest commercial importance, their principal exports being sugar, molasses, coffee, cotton, rum, cocoa, ginger, lime-juice, rice, syrup, tortoiseshell and snuff. The planters were extremely wealthy and owned great numbers of slaves, besides factories and refineries for preparing their goods for export. Before the days of Canadian wheat, fruit, lumber and salmon, Australian wool and New Zealand frozen meat,

the imported products of the West Indies had no rivals except those from India and the Far East. The islands having been the theatre of several recent wars involving capture and recapture many times over, the planters and merchants had come to regard the rights and duties of belligerents and neutrals as absurd restrictions on legitimate commercial enterprise. They were now ignoring the effect of the Treaty of Versailles on the Navigation Laws, by which the Americans Colonies, having become independent, American ships were no longer entitled to trade with British colonial possessions.

This state of affairs was openly connived at by the naval Commander-in-Chief, Sir Richard Hughes, the Governors of the Islands, and the Custom House officials, all of whom sympathised with the merchants' point of view and had no wish to stir up trouble. Nelson, however, who as yet had no social ties ashore, drew Hughes's attention to the Admiralty Statutes which included the Navigation Laws, (notably 7 and 8 William III, cap. 22), and procured from him a formal order to carry them into effect. With this he went to St. Kitts, and as senior naval officer began ordering American ships away from the island. The merchants, thoroughly alarmed, petitioned Hughes to allow the American trade to continue as before, with the result that on 29th December, Hughes gave Nelson fresh orders to the effect that American ships might be allowed to trade with British islands subject to the discretion of the Governors and Presidents. Nelson replied in writing that he would not be subservient to the will of any governor, nor co-operate

with him in doing "*illegal acts.*" To the easy-going Hughes and his money-making friends, the planters, these words seemed like the defiance of an impudent fanatic. What did they care if the Navy should be thought "singular" for not doing its utmost to uphold "the interests of Great Britain?" Hughes's first thought was to supersede Nelson immediately, but he soon found that the opinion of the naval captains on the station was that his order to admit American ships at discretion was illegal and that a court-martial on Nelson was unwarranted.

Meanwhile the cause of all the trouble proceeded on his way, cruising round the islands and chasing away American ships in defiance of the Governors and Presidents, even the Governor-General being "soon trimmed up and silenced." Nelson also sent strongly worded letters to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and to the Secretary of the Admiralty, in which he pointed out that American ships were obtaining British registration illegally with the connivance of the islanders.

Hardly had this dispute reached its infant stages than Nelson considered it his "duty" to stir up further trouble. Commissioner Moutray was a half-pay captain in charge of the Antigua Dockyard, a post which nowadays could only be held by an officer on full pay. Hughes had ordered Moutray to hoist a commodore's broad-pendant in any warship which happened to be at Antigua and to assume the duties of senior naval officer on the station, regardless of the fact that half-pay officers could not hold executive commands and that no one could put an officer

on full pay but the Admiralty. Hughes had acted purely for the sake of convenience, and his order had never been challenged until Nelson arrived and found the offending broad-pendant flying in a ship whose captain was junior to himself. Since he regarded Moutray as "my only valuable friend" and Mrs. Moutray as "a treasure of a woman," he did not go as far as to order the broad-pendant to be struck. But he refused to obey Moutray's orders, complained to Hughes, and made such a fuss that the affair was reported to the Admiralty and Nelson was mildly censured for being over zealous.

Meanwhile the affair of the illegal American trade was reaching a climax, for in May, Nelson seized four American ships at Nevis, whose captains he had clearly warned to leave the island, but who claimed to be British and had been privately told by the Customs Officers that Nelson dare not touch them. Their friends on shore at once countered their seizure by issuing writs against Nelson for illegal detention both of the captains and their ships and cargoes, assessing the damages at £40,000. At the same time a defence fund was opened to pay the captains' legal expenses, it being alleged that Nelson had obtained his evidence against them by threatening their crews. He was unable to go ashore for fear of arrest and was forced to petition the King in order to have his defence conducted at the expense of the Crown, since neither Hughes nor the Governor-General would do anything to help. He had already seized an American ship at St. Kitts and had won the case without much trouble, but the four ships at Nevis proved a more

difficult business and stirred up considerable feeling. Eventually all were condemned as prizes for having been engaged in illegal trade, and "the Admiral seemed much pleased when I paid him prize-money"; as well he might be, seeing that his share was one hundred times that of Nelson. Further seizures were made without much difficulty, and in November, Hughes received the thanks of the Admiralty for having prevented "illicit practices". Nelson's name was not mentioned.

All through this long period of annoyance and anxiety, Nelson had been steadily supported by John Richardson Herbert, the President of Nevis, who at the time of the trial had offered to be Nelson's bail for £10,000, despite the fact that he stood to lose more by Nelson's action than any other man on the island. At Herbert's house Nelson met Mrs. Frances Nisbet, daughter of William Woodward (late Senior Judge of the island) and Herbert's niece. She was a few months older than Nelson, having been married at the age of eighteen to Josiah Nisbet, M.D., who had died within two years, leaving her with a son, aged five, also named Josiah. Exasperated by governors, planters and customs-men, Nelson was soon captivated by the soothing charms of Fanny.

Though living in luxurious style in her uncle's house and acting as his hostess, Fanny Nisbet was financially unprovided for, and having nothing particular to look forward to, was undoubtedly dazzled by the attentions of the most talked-of man in the islands. Nor was she at all deterred by her lover possessing no means beyond his naval pay.

Yet it would be wrong to regard her merely as a scheming widow, hoping to gain protection for herself and her son. Despite her unattractive portrait she was considered by the islanders as something of a belle. "She possesses sense far superior to half the people of our acquaintance and her manners are Mrs. Moutray's." These are mere phrases of justification, written to a brother. When Nelson wrote "separated from you, what pleasure can I feel? none, be assured : all my happiness is centred with thee ; and where thou art not, there I am not happy," he was writing as ardent a love letter as was then considered decorous.

Mr. Herbert, described by Nelson as "very rich and very proud," was well disposed towards the match, saying with some condescension that Nelson though poor was "descended from a good family," and that Fanny should have £20,000 at his death, and more if his only daughter pre-deceased him. Meanwhile he could do little for them, since his expenses were great. So Nelson at once applied to his uncle, William Suckling, who again agreed to give him £100 a year. Actually, Herbert should have been delighted to marry off his unfortunate niece to an outstanding naval officer who also happened to be the great-great-nephew of Sir Robert Walpole, but naturally he concealed these feelings from the naif and humble suitor.

Besides he intended to retire in less than two years and did not wish to lose his niece-house-keeper till then.

So Nelson continued his activities against the American traders, reinforced by expert advice

from his uncle, who consulted the Solicitor to the Custom House in London.

All through the winter of 1785 and the spring and summer of 1786 he kept up the struggle, practically single-handed, and in July 1786, Hughes went home, leaving him in command. He now became aware of an even greater system of frauds, this time of a naval character, connected with the purchases of victuals and stores made by the local Commissioners and officials of the Navy Board. This was a difficult matter to deal with on the spot and required the collection of a considerable body of written evidence.

In October, 1786, Prince William came out as post-captain in command of a ship and put himself under Nelson's orders with the greatest urbanity. On 12th March, 1787, Nelson and Fanny were at last married, Prince William insisting on his right to give away the bride. "My love is founded on esteem, the only foundation that can make the passion last," Nelson had written to Fanny on New Year's Day; words often quoted as comparing oddly with the impetuous overtures at Quebec and St. Omer. The circumstances, however, were different. They were written after an engagement of nearly eighteen months and by no means show that he had begun to repent of his love. In May the *Boreas* was recalled and reached Spithead in July, Fanny being given a passage in a merchant ship. To Nelson's intense disgust, the *Boreas* was kept hanging about at the Nore as a depot ship and was not finally paid off till December.

Before leaving Nevis he had written to Pitt, to Lord Howe, the First Lord, and to Sir Charles

Middleton, the new Comptroller, as well to others, exposing the naval frauds, which amounted to over a million pounds. On coming to London he explained his discoveries in detail to George Rose, Secretary to the Treasury. His conduct was warmly commended and his recommendations adopted though he heard nothing more of the matter at the time.

After short stays at Bath, Bristol and London, Nelson, Fanny and Josiah retired to Burnham Thorpe to live with the Rector, Nelson's mother having died twenty years earlier. The air of London was too smoky for Fanny. But the bracing air of Burnham Thorpe could hardly have been much pleasanter for one who had lived all her life in the tropics. Besides the old rectory, unlike its cheerful and spacious successor, was small and uncomfortable, a dreary place compared to the palatial residence of the President of Nevis. Except for an occasional visit to Nelson's godfather, Lord Walpole at Wolterton, or a fête and ball with Mr. Coke at Holkham, there were no diversions for Fanny but the veriest bucolicisms, North Norfolk being a *cul-de-sac* both socially and geographically. Few people realise how much Fanny gave up when she married Nelson. Yet what more could be done on an allowance of £100 a year each from their respective uncles, and naval half-pay at the rate of 8s. a day?

## CHAPTER III

### THE MEDITERRANEAN

Five years on half-pay - commissions the *Agamemnon* - defence of Toulon - goes to Naples - the Hamiltons - Corsica - capture of Bastia and Calvi - loses his right eye - Hotham in command - Nelson captures the *Ca Ira* and *Centaur* - Battle of Hyères - the Riviera coast.

If Nelson expected that his striking and courageous exposure of illegal trade and frauds on Government, followed by the complimentary utterances of the Admiralty and the Treasury, would soon procure him a suitable ship on a good station, he was wrong. Despite two partial mobilisations through danger of war with the Dutch and Spain he received no satisfaction from his constant applications for employment and was told by Lord Hood that "The King was impressed with an unfavourable opinion of me."

His exposure of the Navy Board frauds in the West Indies had helped to uncover a greater system of frauds than even he dreamed of, while the West Indian merchants used their influence to prejudice the Government against him. Agents of the American captains even sent bumbailiffs all the way to Norfolk to threaten him with actions for damages assessed at £20,000, and though protected by the Treasury, the affront was severe. Prince William, moreover, now Duke of Clarence, was taking a line of his own in politics which did not please the King's Whig Ministers, so that this particular

connection was by no means a recommendation. Revolutionary talk was much in the air and Nelson sent the Prince a detailed schedule of the earnings and expenses of the Norfolk farm-labourers showing the wretchedness of their condition. But on the outbreak of the war with the French Republic in January 1793, Nelson was offered a 64-gun ship of the line at once or a 74 if he was prepared to wait. He accepted for a 64 and was appointed to the *Agamemnon*. As usual he spoke of his ship and his officers and crew in the most ecstatic terms : "without exception the finest ship in the service." "I am well appointed in officers and we are manned exceedingly well." In this case it was no mere burst of enthusiasm since he had shown great energy in obtaining a strong nucleus of volunteer seamen from the Norfolk ports.

Josiah Nisbet went with him as a midshipman, and after a month's service in the Channel the *Agamemnon* was ordered to join the fleet under Lord Hood then proceeding to the Mediterranean. At the end of July they reached Toulon, but found the French inactive. "I hardly think the War can last," Nelson wrote, "for what are we at War about?" After four weeks' parleying, the principal citizens invited Hood to come ashore and take possession of Toulon in the name of the French monarchy. Here was a situation beyond the dreams of any previous British naval commander. Toulon, the base of all French Mediterranean operations, inviting British protection ! Hood, realising that the republicans would soon attempt to capture the town and that he must have troops with which to defend it, sent the

*Agamemnon* with letters for Turin and Naples asking for troops, the Kings of Sardinia and the Two Sicilies having joined the First Coalition against Republican France.

The Neapolitans, fearful of an attack from France, greeted the *Agamemnon* with the same exaggerated and mercurial enthusiasm which they always reserved for useful allies. Nelson was gorgeously entertained and promised 6,000 troops and transports immediately. "My poor fellows have not had a morsel of fresh meat or vegetables for near nineteen weeks," he wrote to Fanny the day before he landed.

"Lady Hamilton," he informed her two days later, "has been wonderfully kind to Josiah. She is a young woman of amiable manners, and who does honour to the station to which she is raised." This is the first mention in Nelson's correspondence of that remarkable woman "raised" to the "station" of wife to Sir William Hamilton, the British Minister, to whom she had been sent by his nephew and heir, the Hon. Charles Greville, a shrewd young man, who had previously made Emma his own mistress after rescuing her from less pleasant circumstances. Hamilton's first wife had died recently after they had been married twenty-five years. Their only child was also dead, and Greville had hoped to prevent his uncle marrying again, and so disposing of his money, by supplying him with an elegant mistress, even at a personal sacrifice. But Hamilton quickly made Emma his wife when she was twenty-six and he was sixty. By a mixture of prestige and adroitness he also secured for her complete acceptance at the Neapolitan

Court where her personal influence soon became very considerable.

In November Hood gave Nelson a tiny squadron as an independent command to act against some French frigates he had previously encountered off Sardinia. A month later the Republican army had advanced on Toulon and driven the international garrison from the surrounding heights. Hood decided to evacuate the town immediately, but the Republicans advanced so quickly that the utmost confusion ensued. The allied troops fled in disorder and, in attempting to embark, became hopelessly mixed up with Royalist civilians also attempting to reach the British fleet in boats. Some of the French warships were carried out by Hood, some were burnt by his orders and some were left for the Republicans. At the last moment, Captain Sir Sidney Smith destroyed part of the dockyard and arsenal while the dockyard workers, Republicans almost to a man, clamoured at the dockyard gates, with Republican cannon-balls falling on all alike without discrimination. So, amidst scenes of horror and confusion, Lord Hood evacuated Toulon, and the Republican army massacred the Royalist inhabitants.

Meanwhile, Nelson, on Hood's instructions, had begun negotiations with General Paoli, leader of the Corsican nationalist party who wished to place the island under British protection. Corsica had been sold to France by Genoa in 1768, but the Corsicans had never been reconciled to French rule and looked upon the Revolutionary War as a good opportunity for asserting their independence. At the end of January 1794, Nelson

made a surprise landing at San Fiorenzo and a few days later was joined by Hood with the main body of the fleet.

Now that Toulon was in the hands of the Republicans it was clear that offensive operations might be expected, and the British fleet needed a base inside the Mediterranean. Gibraltar was too far, Minorca had been lost in the American War and ceded to Spain by the Treaty of Versailles. Hood, therefore, decided to make his base at Corsica. The French troops were concentrated chiefly at San Fiorenzo and Calvi on the north-west of the island and at Bastia on the east. On 17th February British troops landed under General Dundas and captured San Fiorenzo with comparative ease, the garrison retiring at once to Bastia. Nelson had meanwhile been very active in stopping enemy trade and in cutting out vessels lying close in-shore. He had also landed several times with raiding parties, and on 19th February he captured L'Avasina.

Hood was bent on attacking Bastia at once, but Dundas hesitated to move his troops without reinforcements, and after weeks of delay, Nelson persuaded Hood to land ships' companies and such troops as were serving in the fleet as marines. Having sent away all ships whose captains were senior to Nelson, Hood brought the remainder round to Bastia and established a close blockade. On 4th April Hood landed his force, which consisted of about 1,100 marines, a handful of gunners grudgingly lent by Dundas, and 250 seamen under Nelson, together with ships' carpenters and a number of ships' guns. The siege proved most arduous, the attackers having to

construct roads, trenches, batteries and gun platforms, while Dundas remained inactive at San Fiorenzo. The naval force was helped to some extent by the Corsican Nationalists, but its real strength lay in the support given by the blockade. The town surrendered at the end of May, the garrison out-numbering the attackers by five to one. Nelson received "a sharp cut in the back" at some time during the siege, but remained in good health.

The next enterprise should have been the siege of Calvi, but Hood was diverted from this by the news that nine of the line had sailed from Toulon. Having chased them into a well-protected anchorage at Golfe Jouan, he returned to Corsica, sending Nelson on ahead to shift the troops and siege equipment from Bastia round to Calvi. Dundas had just been superseded by General the Hon. Charles Stuart, an officer of great experience and ability who with his able subordinate Colonel John Moore (later of Coruña), showed himself ready to press the siege with the utmost vigour.

This time the troops and seamen (under Nelson) landed together, but as at Bastia, the operations were extremely difficult and there were frequent outbursts of temper between the two services. On 12th July, Nelson was struck on the face and head by stones and splinters thrown up by a shot hitting the parapet of one of the advanced batteries. His right eye was so badly injured that he soon lost the sight of it completely, though he still remained on duty. The siege had reached a critical stage, there being a long sick-list and little progress. "The climate is the only enemy

we have to fear," he told Hood, "that we can never conquer." Tempers naturally became more frayed than ever and, to Nelson's mind, Colonel Moore seemed utterly insufferable. On 10th August, however, the garrison of Calvi surrendered but were allowed the honours of war much to Nelson's disgust.

In October, Hood went home on leave and was succeeded by Vice-Admiral William Hotham, a brave and experienced officer, but fearful of the responsibilities of a great command and looking upon himself merely as a stop-gap until Hood's return. On 8th March, 1795, when lying with the fleet at Leghorn, Hotham heard that the French had left Toulon and next day put to sea. The French were sighted by frigates almost immediately and Hotham steered to the north with the intention of cutting them off from Toulon. On 12th March the fleets were within sight of each other, but a change of wind prevented an action. Next morning, however, Hotham was able to chase with a fresh wind, and a French ship of eighty-four guns, the *Ça Ira*, having lost her topmasts in a collision, fell astern and was towed by a frigate.

The *Agamemnon* was the nearest British ship, and Nelson, entirely unsupported, succeeded in damaging the *Ça Ira* by raking her stern with alternate broadsides to which no reply was possible. Next morning, 14th March, every effort was made to cut her off, and there was a partial action between the leading British ships and the French rear, in which the *Agamemnon* captured, not only the *Ça Ira*, but also the *Censeur* (74); which then had her in tow.

Nelson immediately boarded the *Britannia* and urged a relentless pursuit, but Hotham, "much cooler than myself, said, 'We must be contented, we have done very well !' Now, had we taken ten sail, and had allowed the eleventh to escape, when it had been possible to have got at her, I could never have called it well done." Strangely enough, Hood had used almost exactly the same words when his own request to Rodney after the Battle of the Saints had received an equally cool answer. Equally like Hood's subsequent comment was Nelson's, "Sure I am, had I commanded our Fleet on the 14th, that either the whole French Fleet would have graced my triumph, or I should have been in a confounded scrape."

After this the fleet cruised between Leghorn, Corsica and Minorca while the French refitted, and, on 1st June, Nelson was appointed a Colonel of Marines, which brought him extra pay without extra work. The *Agamemnon* was next sent with some frigates to co-operate with the Austrian and Sardinian troops then attempting to dislodge the French from Genoese territory. On 6th July, when off Oneglia, Nelson found himself in sight of the whole French fleet of seventeen of the line. He quickly ran south, leading the French in pursuit of him towards Corsica and straight to where the main British force was lying. Unfortunately the wind robbed Hotham of the chance of a surprise attack, but he pursued the French all the way back to Toulon and on 13th July came up with them. There was a partial action, and a French ship struck, but was set on fire, and Hotham called off the chase when he

saw the French taking shelter in Frejus Bay and the wind blowing straight on shore. Nelson's comments were sarcastic, both as regards Hotham's ineptitude and the cowardice of the French.

Two days later he was sent with a small squadron to continue his activities on the Riviera coast. His duties were delicate but strenuous. In the first place, he must do his utmost to stop all coastal traffic, on which the south of France relied for its food supplies. Secondly, he must prevent the French sending troops and supplies by sea to their army operating near Alassio. If possible, he must also prevent troops and supplies reaching them by road, a task which would necessitate frequent raids on the coast. His duties to the Austrians lay in helping them to transport their troops and supplies along the coast and in firing on the French troops from the sea whenever possible. But in all these enterprises he must be careful to respect Genoese neutrality, despite the fact that both the French and Austrian armies were at that moment fighting on Genoese territory. The Genoese themselves made little protest, though they were inclined to be pro-French, but when it was a question of seizing French ships in Genoese waters or Genoese ships supplying the French army with food, they protested violently. Hotham who Nelson remarked, "has no political courage whatever, and is alarmed at the mention of any strong measure," gave Nelson no support, and in consequence the Austrians complained that the British did not carry out their promises. The situation, however, was almost farcical, for Nelson soon realised that the

Austrians, far from wishing to push the war vigorously, were simply using his embarrassment as an excuse for their own inaction.

Early in November, Hotham went home and was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, who reduced Nelson's squadron to a frigate and a brig, in addition to the *Agamemnon*, and took the main fleet off Corsica, all because of the possibility of a French sortie from Toulon. On 24th November the Austrians were completely defeated by the French at Loano Bay, the French gunboats coming close in to attack their flank, and Nelson being unable to give them any support.

## CHAPTER IV

### ST. VINCENT AND SANTA CRUZ

Jervis takes command - Nelson off Genoa - appointed a commodore - Spain joins France - Nelson evacuates Corsica - Mediterranean abandoned - Nelson evacuates Elba - - Battle of St. Vincent - promoted to flag rank and knighted - inshore at Cadiz - attacks Santa Cruz - loses his right arm - returns to England - rejoins Mediterranean fleet.

On 29th November, 1795, Admiral Sir John Jervis arrived at San Fiorenzo as Commander-in-Chief. The fleet was by now in a wretched condition due to Hotham's administrative neglect. Scurvy and disease were rampant and fresh food difficult to obtain, while the fleet was wholly lacking in soap, medical stores, clothing, and hammocks. Ammunition, canvas, carpenters' and blacksmiths' stores were equally lacking, and many of the ships needed immediate refitting. Nevertheless the easy-going days of Hotham were over and a new spirit was breathed into the campaign. Jervis at once took the offensive and established a close blockade of Toulon, meanwhile doing everything possible to increase the fighting efficiency of the fleet.

Nelson had been refitting at Leghorn when Jervis first arrived and did not rejoin the fleet for some weeks. Notwithstanding Nelson's reputation for truculence and officiousness, Jervis who was one of the sternest disciplinarians ever created, greeted him, "not only with the greatest attention, but with much apparent friendship." He at once offered Nelson a go-gun ship or a

74 and was probably more impressed with Nelson's refusal to abandon the highly trained personnel of the *Agamemnon* than if his offer had been accepted. It was a momentous first meeting, since these two were soon destined to play an important dual part in naval affairs. "Of all the fleets I ever saw," wrote Nelson, "I never saw one in point of officers and men to equal Sir John Jervis's, who is a commander able to lead them to glory."

Nelson was ordered to resume his work in the Gulf of Genoa, but with a larger squadron and increased powers. In April, 1796, Jervis appointed him a commodore.

After the defeat of the Austrians, Genoa declared for France and Bonaparte took command of the army destined to invade the northern States of Italy. In April he defeated the Austrians at Montenotte and forced Sardinia to make peace, and in June he captured Leghorn and overran Tuscany. Nelson did his best to hinder the victorious progress of the French. At the end of May he captured six ships carrying their heavy land-artillery, together with maps and plans sent by the Directory to Bonaparte. Later in the summer he captured Elba and the island of Capraja in order to facilitate the blockade of Leghorn. Meanwhile, Jervis had transferred him to the *Captain* (74), the *Agamemnon* being too much in need of a refit at home to endure another winter in the Mediterranean. Nelson clearly expected to receive his flag at this time and showed great anxiety lest this might result in his being sent home and placed on half-pay, though Jervis promised to keep him in the Mediterranean.

Indeed Jervis was most anxious that he should stay, and "seems at present to regard me more as an associate than a subordinate officer."

But a fresh series of events soon upset all Nelson's immediate plans. for Spain, having left the coalition against France of 1793, concluded an alliance with France in October 1796. This gave France the use of 700 miles of coastline in the Mediterranean and the ports of Cadiz, Coruña and Ferrol in the Atlantic. Such a step had long been foreseen by the British Cabinet and as early as September Jervis had been instructed to evacuate Corsica which an additional enemy fleet would soon render untenable. Nelson undertook and completed the evacuation within a fortnight of war's being declared, but Jervis, trusting to the well-known incompetence of the Spaniards, wished to keep his fleet within striking distance of Leghorn and Toulon, making Elba his base. His object was, first, to cover Nelson's squadron, and second, to protect British trade, and third, to prevent an invasion of central and southern Italy, under cover of the French Toulon fleet. By November, however, he decided that this isolated position was too dangerous, and withdrew the fleet to Gibraltar, and from there sent Nelson in the *Minerze* frigate (38 guns) to evacuate Elba. When off Cartagena, Nelson, whose force consisted of only two frigates, met two Spanish frigates. One he captured after a hard fight, but lost again on the appearance of two Spanish ships of the line and two more frigates. When he reached Elba, General de Burgh, the Commander of the troops refused to withdraw without positive orders from the War

Office, so Nelson left him with a small flotilla and evacuated Sir Gilbert Elliot the British Viceroy of Corsica and his staff and also the naval stores.

On his return to Gibraltar he reconnoitred Toulon, Cartagena, and Port Mahon and at Gibraltar learnt that the Spanish Mediterranean fleet had just passed the Straits to the westward, where Jervis was reported to be cruising. Nelson at once sailed alone, and narrowly escaped capture by two Spanish ships of the line while waiting to pick up Lieutenant Hardy in a boat lowered to rescue a man fallen overboard. On the night of 12th February, 1797 he found himself in the middle of the Spanish fleet, but the weather being hazy he passed through them undetected, and next morning joined Jervis off Cape St. Vincent and shifted his commodore's broad-pendant back to the *Captain*.

On the morning of 14th February the Spanish fleet were seen through haze to the south, with the wind practically astern of them at west by south. They were steering east towards Cadiz, where they intended to wait and then go on to join the French at Brest, a move which it was most necessary to prevent. By carrying a press of sail, Jervis came up with them at about 11.30 a.m., his own fleet consisting of fifteen ships already formed in line ahead, the *Captain's* station being last but two in the rear. The Spaniards who numbered twenty-seven of the line, were disposed in two separate divisions and made no attempt whatever to form a line of battle, so that Jervis by continuing to steer south in line ahead (single file) was able to pass between them. The easterly or leeward squadron, consisting of nine ships,

attempted to come to the wind and stop him, but since they failed to form a line they could not bring their guns properly to bear and were beaten off by the larboard broadsides of the British fleet. Jervis now signalled his fleet to tack in *succession* so that his leading ships by turning back on a northerly course might engage the larger force of eighteen Spanish ships which were to the west of him and to windward, led by the gigantic flagship the *Santissima Trinidad*. Meanwhile the rear ships of the British line were able to continue firing on the smaller Spanish squadron with their larboard guns until rounding the hairpin bend. The Spanish windward ships however, although themselves superior to the British and in a commanding tactical position, turned north so as to avoid action. Nelson, seeing that most of them would escape before the leading British ships were round the hairpin bend, wore out of the line and put about to engage them direct, thus cutting off a considerable distance, Jervis was prevented from making a general signal to the same effect because of the nine Spanish ships on his larboard side, but he instantly divined the value of Nelson's individual manœuvre and signalled the *Excellent* (Captain Collingwood), the rearmost ship, to put about and go to Nelson's support. The *Captain* meanwhile was engaged with a group of seven Spanish ships mounting a total of over 600 guns, with no other support than the *Culloden* (Captain Troubridge), the leading ship in the line and therefore the first to come round the hairpin bend. Eventually these two were joined by the *Excellent* and the ships immediately astern of the *Culloden*, and the Spanish

three-deckers wilted under the fire of ships whose broadsides were only three-fifths as powerful as their own. Two Spanish ships engaged by the *Excellent* hauled down their colours, but Collingwood, instead of waiting to secure them, pushed on to support the *Captain*, at that time engaged with the *San Nicolas* [84]. After giving this ship one broadside he continued to push further ahead, while Nelson, his ship a complete wreck, grappled the *San Nicolas* and called for boarders. Ordering his own captain, Ralph Miller, to stay in the ship, Nelson, although a commodore, personally led a party which broke into the *San Nicolas*' stern cabin. The Spanish officers shut the cabin doors and fired through the windows with pistols, but after a stiff fight, Nelson's party reached the quarter-deck, to find it already in the hands of Captain Edward Berry, a passenger in the *Captain* who had boarded with a separate party. They were now in possession of the *San Nicolas*, but suddenly found themselves fired on by musketry from the *San Josef*, a three-decker flagship of 112 guns, which had collided with the *San Nicolas* and lay on the far side of her. Nelson called for more boarders and rushed from one Spanish ship to the other. The *San Josef* having already received considerable punishment and with her admiral mortally wounded, surrendered almost at once, and Nelson stood on her quarter-deck while he received the swords of the Spanish officers. These he handed to his boatswain, who stuck them under his arm, "as if he were making up a faggot."

The Spaniards lost four ships altogether, Nelson being responsible for two of them, and the

remainder, many of them severely battered and in a sinking condition, retired to Cadiz. The "very necessary" victory had been obtained in a most decisive and striking manner. Jervis, apparently dissatisfied with the final result, showed his displeasure by refusing to mention his three junior flag-officers in his public despatch. To avoid an open scandal therefore, Commodore Nelson's name could not be mentioned either. In his private letter to the First Lord, however, Nelson "contributed very much to the fortune of the day." Jervis was created Earl St. Vincent and Nelson received the Knighthood of the Bath, a higher honour then than it is to-day. He had specially asked that he might not be given a baronetcy, an intolerable burden for a man "without a fortune to support the Dignity." "Chains and Medals are what no fortune or connexion in England can obtain," he wrote to his brother William, "and I shall feel prouder of these than all the Titles in the King's power to bestow."

In April he received his promotion by seniority to Rear-Admiral, dated 20th February and having therefore nothing to do with the battle, since the news had not reached home by then.

After a refit at Lisbon and a fruitless cruise in search of Spanish treasure-ships, Nelson was sent to evacuate the Elba garrison, and afterwards was given command of the in-shore squadron blockading Cadiz. This was a very dangerous service, or rather, Nelson made it a very dangerous service by interpreting it to mean a vigorous offensive against the enemy ships in the outer harbour. There were constant night attacks in

boats, and fights with the Spanish flotilla, in one of which Nelson's barge was nearly captured by a Spanish gunboat and he himself only saved from death by the devotion of his coxswain. "It was during this period," Nelson himself wrote, "that perhaps my personal courage was more conspicuous than at any other period of my life."

St. Vincent next sent him on a more important and still more dangerous enterprise—namely, an attack on the port of Santa Cruz in the Spanish island of Tenerife, a favourite place for the treasure-ships to wait until they knew the coast was clear for a run into Cadiz. On this occasion a rich ship from Manila was reported to be at Santa Cruz. But although an attack on the island presupposed the employment of troops, neither the commander of the Gibraltar garrison nor the commander of the troops from Elba would co-operate. St. Vincent, therefore, decided to use naval forces alone and sent Nelson, with his flag in the *Theseus* (74) and a total force of three of the line, one 50, three frigates, a cutter and a mortar-boat. The difficulties of the attack were immense : the town and harbour were defended by a citadel and numerous forts occupied by over 8,000 troops ; sudden off-shore gales were liable to sweep down from the hills surrounding the port ; there were strong currents, and above all, the rocky shore was beaten by a heavy surf, even at the calmest season. Nelson decided to attempt a surprise landing just east of the town, at dawn, on 21st July. But owing to contrary winds and the strong current, the boats with the parties of seamen and marines were unable to land till broad daylight, and were so strongly

opposed that they all had to be re-embarked later in the day. Nelson had now lost his only advantage—surprise—but, considering it essential to his honour to make one more effort, he planned a night attack for 24th July, this time on the town itself. Most of the officers, including Nelson, regarded it as a forlorn-hope. He himself “never expected to return.” A thousand men were put into boats and rowed stealthily to the shore under the personal command of Nelson and his seven captains. All went well till within about 200 yards of the shore, when the Spaniards, very much on the alert, opened fire with every weapon they possessed. The first objective was the Mole (now the base of the long, modern quay enclosing a large part of the harbour). Owing, however, to the darkness, current, and general confusion, many of the boats did not see it and were battered to pieces by the surf in attempting to land elsewhere. The scaling-ladders were lost, the powder hopelessly damped and over 250 men (a quarter of the force) were killed, drowned or wounded. Nevertheless, about 340 men landed, and rallied in the square under Captain Troubridge, who next morning sent Captain Samuel Hood to the Governor of the citadel to say that unless the British were allowed to withdraw unmolested they would fire the town. The bluff succeeded, chiefly owing to the Spaniards being unaware of their real numbers, and next morning they were re-embarked under a flag of truce.

Nelson reached the Mole in his boat, but was struck in the right arm by a grape shot just as he was landing. Josiah Nisbet, now a Lieutenant, had insisted on accompanying his step-father, ignoring

Nelson's suggestion that he should stay in the ship. He now took command of the boat, and with the help of a seaman bound up the wound with handkerchiefs and pieces of shirt. Nelson recovered consciousness to hear Josiah ordering the boat's crew to row close under the nearest Spanish battery so as to be safe from its fire. At that moment the *Fox* cutter was sunk by gunfire just alongside of them, and Nelson, despite his wound and loss of blood, insisted on helping drag some of the crew into his boat. Then they pulled away from the shore and reached the *Seahorse*, but Nelson refused to go on board lest his condition should frighten Captain Fremantle's wife, at the moment when her husband was reported missing. At last they reached the *Theseus*, Nelson refusing any help in climbing on board, and immediately afterwards his arm was amputated, anaesthetics being unavailable at that date. But despite his bravery and endurance, he was terribly prostrated and wrote to St. Vincent : "A left-handed Admiral will never again be considered as useful, therefore the sooner I get to a very humble cottage the better." His only anxiety seems to have been for the promotion of Josiah, who had undoubtedly saved his life and was made a Commander shortly afterwards.

On rejoining the main fleet, Nelson was invalided home suffering great pain and only able to sleep by taking doses of laudanum. His arm had been cut off very near the shoulder, and in the confusion and semi-darkness of the cockpit, a nerve had been included with the artery when it was tied. None of the doctors he consulted at Bath and London when he came home were

able to do anything for him, and it was not till November that the ligature came away and he found complete relief. All this time he was nursed by Fanny, who herself undertook the dressing of his arm. He was received by the King in a most flattering manner and invested with the Order of the Bath. He was praised by the Admiralty and Prince William (now Duke of Clarence). He was granted a pension of £700 a year for his services, and received the Freedom of the City of London. He was now a national character.

While on a visit to Bath he was given Lord Shelburne's seat in a box at the theatre, which was in consequence crowded with "the handsomest ladies," "and was I a bachelor I would not answer for not being tempted ; but as I am possessed of everything which is valuable in a wife, I have no occasion to think beyond a pretty face." He also acquired a "cottage," in the shape of a small house near Ipswich, though he never lived in it himself, for on discovering that a left-handed admiral was quite acceptable, he agreed to rejoin St. Vincent and hoisted his flag in the *Vanguard*.

## CHAPTER V

### BATTLE OF THE NILE

Nelson sent to watch Toulon - blown off his station - reinforced - pursues French to Alexandria - arrives too soon - waters and provisions at Syracuse - returns to Egypt - French in Aboukir Bay - Nelson's captains - fleets compared - action in the bay - Nelson wounded - French defeated.

NELSON chose Edward Berry as his flag captain and joined St. Vincent off Cadiz in April, 1798. The naval situation was one of extreme difficulty. The French were preparing, together with an army under Bonaparte, a great expedition at Toulon the destination of which was unknown, while St. Vincent was too weak in numbers to enter the Mediterranean and at the same time to maintain the blockade of Cadiz. He decided, however, that something must be done about Toulon and sent Nelson into the Mediterranean with three of the line, three frigates and a sloop to find out what was happening. In London the Admiralty had reached the same decision almost at the same moment and were writing to St. Vincent that they might send him reinforcements in order that he should be strong enough to detach a squadron to watch Toulon. St. Vincent was, therefore, able to promise Nelson "some choice fellows of the in-shore Squadron," and a few days afterwards the Admiralty's intentions were confirmed by a further letter exactly anticipating St. Vincent's disposition by themselves suggesting Nelson for the detached command.

The moment the reinforcements from England were sighted from the masthead, St. Vincent sent

off ten of the line and a 50-gun ship from his own fleet to join Nelson, thus giving him a very respectable force. Two of the other flag officers in the fleet, Sir John Orde and Sir William Parker, naturally expected that their own claims to such a special command would have been preferred to those of practically the most junior Rear-Admiral in the Navy, but St. Vincent undeceived "the Barons" with some vehemence. They may also have felt that Nelson's manœuvres at the Battle of St. Vincent had been irregular and disobedient. But when St. Vincent had heard this view expressed by his own flag captain, Sir Robert Calder, he had been equally vehement in his reply.

On 20th May, Nelson was driven 300 miles off his station by a heavy north-westerly gale and took refuge at the south-eastern end of Sardinia. The *Vanguard* was a complete wreck, having lost her fore-mast, main top-mast and mizzen-top-mast, and was only saved from the rocks by the exertions of Captain Ball in the *Alexander*. Meanwhile the frigates had retired to Gibraltar, thinking that Nelson had gone there. By tremendous efforts the *Vanguard* was refitted, the Sardinians being truculent and ill-disposed, and in four days Nelson was off Toulon again with his three line-of-battle ships, only to find that the French had sailed with the same gale which had driven him south from his station.

Assuming that they could not have run down the Spanish coast with a north-westerly gale, he decided to look for them on the Italian side, between Corsica and the mainland. On 5th June off Elba he met Hardy's brig *Mutine* with news of the reinforcements, and two days later, after

anxious watching, they were at last sighted. "My Distress for Frigates is extreme," Nelson wrote, meaning that he had no spare ships for reconnaissance. Nevertheless, the French if encountered at sea would have been at a great disadvantage, since their superiority in ships of the line would have been more than discounted by the difficulty they would have had in protecting their transports. Nothing could be seen of them off the coast of Tuscany or the Papal States, and it was not till 14th June that Nelson learnt that they had been sighted off Sicily as long ago as 4th June, steering east.

By now he was fairly certain that their objective was Egypt, and, therefore, sailed south, only pausing off Naples for news. Here he learnt that the French were attacking Malta, and on passing through the Straits of Messina he learnt that they had captured it. When off Cape Passaro he learnt that Malta was occupied by a French garrison and that the French fleet had left again, presumably for Sicily, though, with the wind blowing strongly from the north-west, this seemed unlikely. He thought, however, that their objective must be either Constantinople or Egypt, and decided to sail for Alexandria. He reasoned that the Egyptian project was the more likely of the two and also the more dangerous for Britain, since from Egypt the French might obtain transports in the Red Sea and sail to India, where they would be welcomed by Tippoo Sahib, the most influential of the anti-British rulers.

Nelson reached Alexandria on 28th June, only to find that the French were not there and that nothing had been heard or seen of them. He,

therefore, sailed again on the 30th, following the coast of Syria and Asia Minor across to Crete, and so back to Syracuse, fearing that Sicily after all was their objective. His fleet by now was short of victuals and very short of water, and the *Vanguard* was still using her improvised fore-mast. The French had certainly enjoyed excellent luck, for sailing on 20th May (the day of the gale) with thirteen of the line and 40,000 troops in over 200 transports, they had captured Malta at a blow and reached Egypt on 1st July, only a few hours after Nelson had withdrawn. He had actually passed them and reached Egypt first, the reason being that the French had been compelled to make the speed of their fleet the speed of their slowest transport. At one moment the two fleets could have been only just out of sight of each other. A couple of British frigates might well have brought about contact and a battle.

The French escape caused Nelson the greatest anxiety, for despite his abrupt methods and constancy of purpose, he was extremely sensitive to criticism, even before it was uttered. Health and temper, moreover, were so closely allied in him that dejection produced an immediate physical reaction, including trouble with his left eye, resulting from the original injury to the right one. This trouble was gradually increasing, aggravated by continuous use of the telescope, and he always wore a green shade when at sea.

By St. Vincent's instructions Nelson was empowered to treat as hostile any port which refused him supplies, and he anchored at Syracuse on 19th July and demanded food and water. The Governor as a neutral was doubtful how to act,

but was persuaded to obey not so much out of compliance to a special letter from Naples, as from the utter impossibility of turning Nelson away. In five days the fleet was revictualled with fresh meat, fruit, vegetables and wine, and 250 tons of fresh water per ship. In later days Nelson gave the credit for this to Lady Hamilton.

Nelson knew now that the French must be to the east of him, and leaving Syracuse on 25th July, he sailed to the Gulf of Coron, where he learnt that they had been seen steering south-east from Crete four weeks previously. He at once headed for Alexandria and on 1st August saw the French transports lying in the harbour, and at 2.30 p.m. the *Zealous* signalled the presence of a battle fleet lying a little further east in Aboukir Bay.

Nelson decided to attack at once without any preliminary reconnaissance, hoping thereby to obtain the advantage of surprise. Many commanders would have hesitated to attack an enemy apparently formed in line of battle and lying in a chosen anchorage, but Nelson had been planning the action for weeks past and had foreseen every eventuality. He had thoroughly briefed all his captains, a rather unusual procedure in those days, when admirals sometimes called formal councils of war for the purpose of giving themselves an excuse for not fighting. Nelson's purpose was different ; he called his " Band of Brothers " together in order to make use of their advice and also to settle plans in advance. Berry, Miller, Hood, Troubridge, Saumarez, Foley, Louis and Hallowell were all men of outstanding ability, trained by St. Vincent at the " in-shore " station,

and the first four had been Nelson's close companions at St. Vincent and Santa Cruz.

The relative strength of the two fleets can be best seen as follows :

	<i>British</i>	<i>French</i>
Ships of 120 guns	0	1
" " 80 "	0	2
" " 74 "	13	9
" " 50 "	1	0
Frigates	0	4

The wind varied between north-west and north-north-west, and Admiral de Brueys, the French Commander-in-Chief, with his flag in the *Orient* (120), had anchored very near the 5-fathom line of soundings on the windward side of the bay, in a slightly curved line ahead, the general direction of which was north-west to south-east. He had stationed his four frigates inside his line where they were useless for reconnaissance and so gave no warning of Nelson's approach. Nevertheless, it was not till 5.45 in the evening that Captain Foley in the *Goliath* rounded the shoals stretching beyond the island at the west end of the bay, so that de Brueys had had three hours in which to prepare for action. At 6.30 the *Goliath* crossed the head of the French line, giving the *Guerrier* a terrific broadside through the bows, and anchoring in-shore and abreast of the *Conquérant*, the second ship in the French line. Undoubtedly Foley was following Nelson's intentions in attacking in this manner, the idea being to put the enemy van between the fire of two lines of ships one on each side. Nelson may also have counted on the French being unprepared for such a manœuvre and in consequence not

having their larboard guns ready for action. This proved to be the case. The difficulty lay in having to squeeze between the French ship and the shoal-water edging the bay.

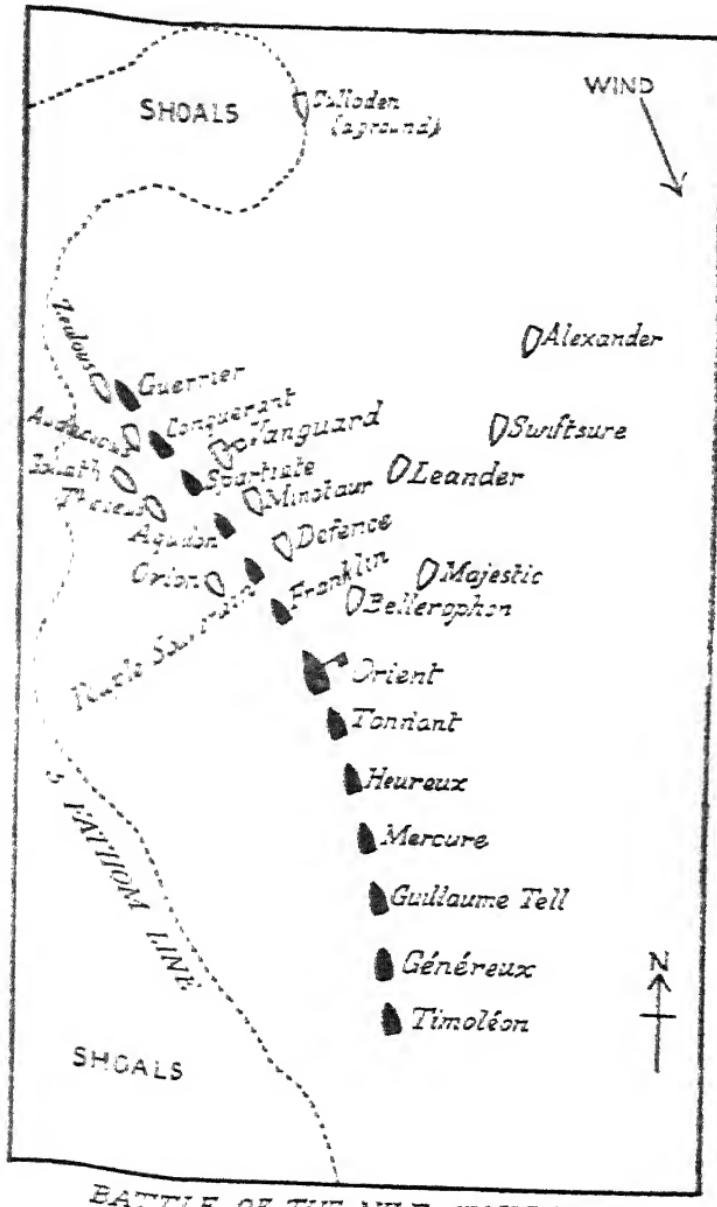
At the end of an hour Nelson had his eight leading ships in action ; the *Orion*, *Theseus*, *Goliath*, *Audacious* and *Zealous* lay on the in-shore side of the French line, and the *Defence*, *Minotaur* and *Vanguard* on the outside, all anchored by the stern. From this position they poured a crushing fire into the five leading Frenchmen from double and even triple-shotted guns, fired as rapidly as possible from a range at which it was impossible to miss.

The *Guerrier* had all her masts knocked out a quarter of an hour after the action began, and soon after eight o'clock all five were silenced, the damage in the *Guerrier* being so great that the gun-ports on her main deck were blown into one continuous gash, the intervening timber having been smashed to pieces. There were only eight casualties in the *Zealous* and fifteen in the *Defence*.

By 7 p.m. it was quite dark, so that both sides were now committed to the hazards and confusion of a night action. Nelson was in his element, watching from the quarter-deck of the *Vanguard* the defeat of the French van and the approach of his six remaining ships. Suddenly he was hit on the forehead by a fragment of iron shot and collapsed in Berry's arms, thinking himself mortally wounded. The cut was so deep that the skin hung down over his left eye, leaving him temporarily blinded and severely concussed. He insisted on waiting his turn with the other wounded in the cockpit, and after having his wound dressed was soon on the move again.

The remaining British ships now began to attack the French centre and rear, which so far had remained at anchor and done nothing to support their van. By the greatest mischance Captain Troubridge ran the *Culloden* aground in trying to cut the corner into the bay, so that only five ships were available, and of these the *Leander* only carried fifty guns. The *Bellerophon* made straight for the massive flagship *Orient*, looming up in the middle of the French line, but was soon driven helplessly to leeward with over 200 casualties. The *Swiftsure* and *Alexander* anchored on either side of the *Orient* and opened a heavy fire, Admiral de Brueys being killed almost immediately. This movement was supported by the *Leander*, whose captain, seeing that the *Peuple Souverain* had had her cable cut and was drifting, placed himself broadside on in the gap, thus managing to rake the *Franklin* and *Orient* simultaneously. These three French ships, although far superior to their three opponents, began to get the worst of it and, on the appearance of the *Orion* and *Defence* from to windward, they were completely crushed.

Just before 9 p.m. a fire was seen on the *Orient's* poop, while gun-fire concentrated on that point prevented all attempts to put it out. Nelson staggered on deck and saw the whole sky lit up by the fire. He at once ordered the *Vanguard's* only boat to go to the rescue of the *Orient's* crew, who continued to serve their guns with the utmost devotion. About 10 p.m. the fire reached the *Orient's* magazine and she blew up with a tremendous explosion, sparks and debris falling on the British ships as they stood clear.



BATTLE OF THE NILE, 1 AUG. 1798.

The *Alexander* and *Majestic* continued down the French line, battering the *Tonnant*, *Heureux* and *Mercure*, which lay astern of the *Orient*, but otherwise her destruction marked the end of the battle. The men dropped exhausted on the decks "and were asleep in a moment in every sort of posture, having been then working at their fullest exertion or fighting, for near twelve hours."

Next morning showed that only the three rear ships in the French line were still intact, the others having either struck, run ashore or blown up, or being ready to surrender. Of these the *Timoléon* ran aground, but the *Guillaume Tell* and *Généreux* made good their escape, together with two of the frigates. The British fleet had been very severely handled but it is possible that had Nelson been fully capable of issuing orders, not a single French ship would have left the bay. Even so, his captains co-operated in a most efficient manner, but in default of definite orders, they were doubtful about the shoals and the strength of their damaged spars and rigging. As a feat of arms involving seamanship, gunnery and simple courage, the Battle of the Nile has never been surpassed.

Nelson's despatches were varied in character. His principal communication, written to St. Vincent, began, "Almighty God has blessed his Majesty's arms," following the style favoured since the days of Blake. To Spencer, Nelson was neither pontifical nor even respectful, starting his letter with, "My Lord, Was I to die at this moment, 'Want of Frigates' would be found stamped on my heart." He was still suffering acutely from his wound.

## CHAPTER VI

### NAPLES AND PALERMO

Voyage to Naples - Nelson's reception - letters to Fanny - Emma and Wilson - situation at Naples - Nelson a peer - letter of the Neapolitans - evacuates the royal family - Brue's crusade - Nelson's dilemma - recaptures Naples - evacuation of Corricello - Bruix's cruise - Nelson and Keith - Nelson, Duke of Bronte - capture of the *Généreux* and *Sainte-Hélène*.

NELSON took the *Vanguard*, *Alexander* and *Culloden* with him to Naples, leaving Hood with a small squadron to watch Alexandria and sending the remainder of his ships and prizes to Gibraltar. On the voyage he made plans for exploiting his success, exactly anticipating the instructions he received later from St. Vincent. Turkish troops must be obtained to act against Bonaparte's army left isolated in Egypt, while the Neapolitans must be made to assist in the reduction of Malta. Naples and Sicily, from the peculiar position they occupied in the Mediterranean, must form the pivot and base of such action and must, therefore, be adequately protected.

Suddenly, however, Nelson was "taken with a fever which has very near done my business." No doubt he was still suffering from shock and concussion caused by his wound. He arrived at Naples physically crushed and mentally exhausted. Here an extraordinary sight met the gaze of his single and by no means painless eye, for as the *Vanguard* entered the bay a multitudinous water-pageant put off from the shore, led by the Hamiltons. "Up flew her Ladyship, and

exclaiming, ‘O God, is it possible?’ she fell into my arms more dead than alive.” The tension was soon relieved by tears and by the arrival of the King in his royal yacht who “took me by the hand, calling me his ‘Deliverer and Preserver.’” All this, Nelson retailed to Fanny, adding, “I hope some day to have the pleasure of introducing you to Lady Hamilton ; she is one of the very best women in this world. . . .

“She is an honour to her sex, and a proof that a reputation may be regained. Her kindness; with Sir William’s, to me, is more than I can express : I am in their house, and I may tell you it required all the kindness of my friends to set me up.”

For the first few days he was desperately ill, and only recovered from his wound and fever through the care of the Hamiltons, at whose house he continued to stay. Wherever he went in the town he was received with royal honours. The climax was reached on his birthday, 29th September, when “eighty people dined at Sir William Hamilton’s : one thousand seven hundred and forty came to a ball where eight hundred supped.” The whole dinner-service was marked “H. N. Glorious 1st of August !”—all ribbons and buttons bore his name, and a “Nelson and Nile” verse was specially added to *God Save the King* for the occasion. The King and Queen of Naples constantly received him both privately and in state, and Lady Hamilton made tours of the city decked with Nelsonic emblems. Almost as soon as the victory was announced and the *Vanguard* not yet arrived, she wrote : “My dress from head to foot is alla Nelson. . . . Even my

shawl is in Blue with gold anchors all over. My earrings are Nelson's anchors ; in short, we are be-Nelsoned all over."

For the first time in his life, Nelson drank the full draught of popular applause, under conditions of the wildest enthusiasm. Nevertheless Nelson was by no means happy. "It is a country," he wrote to St. Vincent, "of fiddlers and poets, whores and scoundrels." And at home Fanny walked to church in the rain. She received a letter from Emma herself, written in the most effusive and patronising terms. "I need not tell your Ladyship how happy Sir William and myself are at having an opportunity of seeing our dear, respectable, brave friend return here, with so much honour to himself and glory for his Country. We only want you to be completely happy. . . . Josiah is so much improved in every respect we are all delighted with him. He is an excellent officer and very steady, and one of the best hearts in the world. I love him much, and although we quarrel sometimes, he loves me, and does as I would have him. . . . Josiah desired his duty to your Ladyship, and says he will write as soon as he has time, but he has been very busy for some time past."

This was too much even for the placid Fanny, and she consulted Alexander Davison, one of Nelson's oldest and most intimate friends and now his official prize-agent. "She bids me say," he wrote to Nelson, "that, unless you return home in a few months, she will join the standard at Naples. Excuse a woman's tender feelings—they are too acute to be expressed."

Meanwhile the love of Nelson and Emma

ripened steadily, being founded on something more than "esteem." But it was an unfortunate love because it could only find complete expression by defying the legal and cultural dictates of the age. Nelson was a man of genius ; not the genius of the creative artist, but the genius of action. He was obsessed by ideas of naval honour and glory, and supported by unsurpassed professional capacity. In action he possessed incredible *élan*. He had what to-day we call the manic drive. With this, as is often the case, went morbidity and sensitiveness, for which he required praise and soothing as a cure. He arrived at Naples wounded and fever-stricken, longing for the praise and justification so long denied him, and found all he wanted in Emma and more besides. He found one of the most striking women in Europe, brought up amidst every conceivable form of poverty and degradation, transported like a slave-girl to Naples, married to an elderly dilettante and now made the First English Lady at one of Europe's gayest wartime courts. Here was the incomparable figure portrayed by Romney, welcoming and applauding him and intoxicating him with her presence. To Emma, Nelson appeared the embodiment of all that was heroic and noble in an Englishman, at a court where despite its gaiety and splendour the threat of impending danger hung very heavily.

Biographers of the last century engulfed by the puritanism which Nelson himself so frequently approved, have described Emma as "vulgar" and "of very humble origin and disreputable antecedents." If only Nelson could have had a

liaison with the Queen of Naples it would have been so much more gentlemanlike. The fact that Nelson saw in Emma a woman of overmastering physical attraction as well as the inspirer and applauder of feats of arms, was to them, not only a terrible offence, but a mockery of love. The fact that Emma saw in Nelson a man whose love was beyond compare they merely interpreted in terms of inveterate lasciviousness born of early habits. The situation was indeed curious, Nelson looking frail and haggard, quite unlike a stage hero, and behaving now like a correct parson's son and now like a completely love-struck boy, openly adoring Emma and careless of the censure and embarrassment of beholders.

Soon Nelson became so obsessed by the presence of Emma that her name kept finding its way into his official correspondence, and that sardonic autocrat, Lord St. Vincent, must have been surprised to read : "I am writing opposite Lady Hamilton, therefore you will not be surprised at the glorious jumble of this letter. Were your Lordship in my place, I much doubt if you would write so well." Nevertheless, Emma did actually occupy a very important position at Naples, where through her intimacy with the Queen and the increasing incompetence of Sir William she became the centre of the militant anti-French party in the Court.

The situation at Naples in 1798 was that the King, Ferdinand IV, divided his time between hunting and various adolescent pursuits, though a man of over forty. The Queen, Maria Carolina —daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and sister of the murdered Queen Marie

Antoinette of France—a woman of considerable ability and vigour, practically ruled the country and worked hard to obtain Austrian support against the French. The First Minister, General Sir John Acton, Bt., was an English adventurer who had made his reputation in the Tuscan Navy. Nelson who saw clearly enough the complete financial, political and moral degradation of the whole kingdom, nevertheless imagined that, with the help of his ships, Naples would be able to form an Italian *bloc* against the southward drive of the French. Austria, Russia and Turkey would also help, but the French were already in Rome and there was no time to be lost. Nelson told Ferdinand to his face that he must either advance, sword in hand, or stay quiet and “be kicked out of your Kingdoms” [Naples and Sicily].

Urged on by such pithy hortations, Ferdinand at last declared war on France, and set out for Rome “determined to conquer or die at the head of his Army which is composed of 30,000 healthy good-looking troops,” a section of which, under General Baron Mack (lent by Austria), were sent to operate in the Marches. At the same time, Nelson co-operated by capturing Leghorn and so cutting off the French supplies.

Just before starting he had received the long-expected news of his being given a peerage. But to his intense disappointment, it turned out to be only a barony because he was not a commander-in-chief at the time of the action, his force being only a detachment from Lord St. Vincent’s fleet. Letters of congratulation were pouring in, Lady Spencer writing, “Joy, joy, joy to you, brave, gallant, immortalized Nelson !”

There were the thanks of Parliament and a pension of £2,000 a year for three lives ; £10,000 from the East India Company ; a gold box set with diamonds from the Czar ; amazing gifts from the Sultan of Turkey, including the diamond Chelengk ; presentation swords from the City of London, and the King of Naples, and letters of the highest praise from Howe, Hood, St. Vincent, Locker and the Duke of Clarence. And after all this, with half Europe applauding and all Naples perspiring with enthusiasm, nothing but a barony from a grateful King and Cabinet, accompanied by a comic-opera augmentation of arms. St. Vincent had received an earldom for capturing four Spanish ships, including the two taken by Nelson. More than ever must he look to Emma for applause : "What can I say of her's and Sir William's attention to me ?" he enquired of Fanny, "they are, in fact, with the exception of you and my good father, the dearest friends I have in this world. . . . The improvement made in Josiah by Lady Hamilton is wonderful ; your obligations and mine are infinite on that score."

Meanwhile, Ferdinand had entered Rome in triumph, though his position was precarious since the French still held the Castle of St. Angelo and were in some strength also in the neighbourhood.

A few days later the Neapolitan army bolted ; "the Neapolitan Officers have not lost much honour, for God knows they had but little to lose ; but they lost all they had. . . . The Queen has made me promise not to quit her and her Family till brighter prospects open upon her. She is miserable, we know. None from this house

have seen her these three days, but her letters to Lady Hamilton paint the anguish of her soul."

This was to Lord Spencer, who must have shaken his head as he saw the capture of Malta and the blockade of Bonaparte's troops in Egypt made strategically subservient to the "anguish" of the Queen of Naples' soul. The result was that Nelson sent Ball to conduct the first enterprise, and the Cabinet sent Captain Sir William Sidney Smith to conduct the second. The situation, nevertheless, in some measure justified Nelson's melodramatic outburst, for with the Neapolitan army defeated and the French advancing, "the capital was in a ferment, and the Republican party, though few in number, was showing great activity, and were waiting for a favourable opportunity to rise." On the night of 21st December, 1798, Nelson embarked the royal family and their treasure in the *Vanguard*, together with the Hamiltons, and sailed for Palermo. This had to be done secretly, by means of a secret passage from the palace, since the *lazzaroni* who were fanatically loyal, would have used the utmost violence to prevent Ferdinand deserting. The whole plan was arranged by Emma for fear that the appearance of Hamilton or Nelson at Court would excite suspicion. At sea she also attended the Queen and nursed her children (one of whom died) during a heavy gale in which none of the royal suite would do a hand's turn.

Nelson's chagrin at the failure of his impetuous and premature policy in Italy soon showed itself in a series of violent letters to Spencer and St. Vincent, protesting against the slights inflicted upon him by the appointment of Sir Sidney

Smith to command the ships blockading Alexandria, and threatening instant resignation.

To Fanny he wrote that it was impossible for him "to set up an establishment at either Naples or Palermo." . . . "Good Sir William, Lady Hamilton and myself, are the main springs of the machine which manages what is going on in this country. We are all bound to England when we can quit our posts with propriety."

The fact was that Fanny, despite her courage and devotion, was the last person imaginable as likely to succeed in taking charge of Nelson under existing conditions. Quite apart from his love for Emma, Fanny's sensitive flutterings would only have been a cause of acute embarrassment to him.

Meanwhile Gaeta and Capua surrendered, and so did Naples, despite the heroic efforts of the *lazzaroni*, and in January, 1799, the French proclaimed the Parthenopæan Republic of Southern Italy. At Palermo, Nelson, ensconced in a house which he shared with the Hamiltons, planned the re-conquest of Naples. General Stuart, his old colleague, had landed in Sicily fresh from the capture of Minorca with 1,000 men, and 12,000 were expected from Russia, while there was every hope that the Austrians would soon be on the move. Ten thousand brigands from Albania were also available, but their help was less cordially canvassed. Ferdinand appointed Cardinal Ruffo his Vicar-General, and sent him across to the mainland to raise the countryside in a religious crusade against the French.

Most of Nelson's ships were still engaged under Captain Ball in blockading Malta but there were some Neapolitan, Portuguese and Russian ships

available for naval co-operation, though they were hardly to be relied on. Nelson, of course, wished to go to Naples personally, but felt tied to Palermo by his instructions, though he still chose to attribute his conduct to the Queen's "anguish of soul." This "anguish" really meant mortal fear of assassination by republicans, a fear excusable perhaps in view of her sister's fate in France. Actually the chief need of the moment was for the supply of food, money and arms to the Maltese to enable them to co-operate with Ball's squadron against the French garrison. Nelson protested furiously to General Acton because the supplies were not sent, but did nothing more, while all through his correspondence at this time Sir Sidney Smith's name kept bobbing up like King Charles' head. The best explanation of his conduct is that during most of his stay in Sicily he suffered from one attack of fever after another resulting from the climate.

By March, Ruffo was at the head of a strong force of Calabrian irregulars—the "Holy Army," pledged to the destruction of the infidel French—and was actually threatening Naples, where the French army was suffering from plague. Nelson sent Troubridge with eight ships to blockade Naples and cut off the French supplies, and the French withdrew all their troops from Neapolitan territory, with the exception of garrisons which they left at Capua, Gaeta and at Naples itself. Troubridge's main trouble was that the Neapolitan officers he carried with him were too inept or cowardly to reassert the King's authority without British help. Otherwise everything was now going well, but on 12th May, news reached

Palermo that the French Brest fleet of nineteen of the line under Admiral Bruix had eluded the British blockade and was about to enter the Mediterranean and join hands with the Spaniards.

Nelson immediately recalled Troubridge from Naples, and Ball from Malta, and arranged for them to join Duckworth at Minorca. He himself would remain at Palermo, since nothing else "could console the Queen this night." Only one of the line and a frigate were to be left at Naples under Captain Foote. A few days later Nelson altered his plans and sent orders for his ships to concentrate off the island of Maritimo at the west end of Sicily, a good strategic area for covering Naples, Sicily and Malta. Next he heard that Bruix had gone into Toulon, and in consequence sent Ball back to Malta with two of the line and took all the rest to Palermo. Here he was joined by Duckworth with four of the line and learnt that St. Vincent was about to resign the command of the Mediterranean. Nelson was angry, realising that his own claims to succeed St. Vincent would not prevail against those of the new second-in-command, Lord Keith, an officer of great distinction, but one not likely to be sympathetic towards Their Sicilian Majesties. Thinking, however, that Bruix was now quiescent, Nelson acceded to the new entreaties of the Queen and embarked 1,700 troops for Naples, and put to sea in the *Foudroyant*. Hardly had he weighed anchor than two of the line arrived from Keith with the news that Bruix was out and coming south. Nelson at once disembarked the troops and returned to his position off Maritimo. Here he remained for a week in a state of the

utmost agitation, fearing that if he put off going to Naples any longer the situation would get entirely out of hand owing to Ruffo's irregular position, while if he did go, Sicily would be left exposed to the French fleet. On 21st June, hearing that Ruffo had captured Naples but had quite sensibly concluded an unauthorised armistice with the Neapolitan Jacobins, he went to Palermo and after a two-hours' conference, sailed for Naples with the Hamiltons. They arrived in the bay on 24th June and saw white flags flying ashore and on board Captain Foote's *Seahorse*. Ruffo's army had captured the town on 13th and 14th June amidst scenes of horror, his Calabrians joining the *lazzaroni* in the torture and murder of hundreds of innocent persons accused of Jacobinism.

The Neapolitan Jacobins had retired into the Castles of Nuovo and Uovo, and the French garrison into the Castle of St. Elmo ; and Ruffo had agreed that the Jacobins should be allowed to leave the town by sea and go to France. Nelson immediately cancelled this treaty by virtue of the authority given him by the King before sailing, and demanded that the Jacobins should surrender themselves unconditionally "to His Majesty's royal mercy." Ruffo, however, refused to give way, because of his authority as Vicar-General, and a complete deadlock ensued, while the situation on shore grew rapidly more dangerous and confused. They at last reached an agreement by which Nelson should allow the Jacobins to leave the castles and to embark in ships, but not to leave the harbour. This was obviously a temporary compromise, and on 28th June letters

arrived from Palermo cancelling Ruffo's negotiations and putting him directly under Nelson, who was to exercise supreme control in the King's name. In a separate letter from the Queen to Emma, "Milord Nelson" was recommended "de traiter Naples comme si ce fut une ville Rebelle en Irlande." Nelson, therefore, placed the Jacobins under a guard, and later on handed them over to the King's officers, who executed seventy of them.

Meanwhile, Ruffo's troops had caught Admiral Francesco Caracciolo, who had turned traitor and joined the Jacobins, and had actually commanded their gunboats. In the past he had proved himself an excellent officer and had commanded a Neapolitan ship in Hotham's fleet during 1795. Ruffo handed him over to Nelson, who ordered the Neapolitan officers present to try him by naval court-martial. Caracciolo asked to be tried by the British, but this was refused, though the trial took place in the *Foudroyant*. He was condemned as a traitor and Nelson had him hanged the same day from the yard-arm of the Neapolitan frigate *Minerva*. The affair created much stir at the time and has led to some controversy since, but there is little doubt that Nelson's action was justified.

The next business was the reduction of the Castle of St. Elmo, where the French garrison still held out, and for this Troubridge was landed with a strong force of seamen, assisted by Austrians, Turks and Russians, and by Ruffo's "Holy" brigands. On 10th July the King arrived from Palermo and set up his Court on board the *Foudroyant*, so that Nelson's

responsibilities were much reduced, and two days later St. Elmo surrendered. After this Nelson sent Troubridge with 1,000 seamen and marines to co-operate in the reduction of Capua. This was a dangerous move, since Nelson had already been warned by Keith to hold his ships ready to protect Minorca in case it was attacked by Bruix. On 13th July he had airily informed Spencer that "it would be a cause of some consideration whether Minorca is to be risked, or the two Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily ? I rather think my decision would be to risk the former." Hardly had he written these words than he received an order from Keith "to send such ships as you can possibly spare off the island of Minorca to wait my orders." The words were clear and courteous, like everything that Keith wrote ; but there was no mistaking their meaning, and Nelson should have complied by sending at least part of his force. But with 1,000 men ashore, this was difficult and he therefore replied to the effect that the restoration of the King of Naples was of paramount importance, as was also the protection of Naples from French attack. Fearing, however, the results of flat disobedience, he also wrote to Spencer defending his action in the most vehement manner : "I will not part with a single ship . . . I am fully aware of the act I have committed."

On 19th July a more peremptory order arrived from Keith. Nelson knew by now that Bruix had joined the Spaniards at Cartagena and had forty of the line, but he answered in exactly the same manner as before, stressing the importance of the siege of Capua, and adding, with unnecessary impertinence, "I am perfectly aware of the

consequences of disobeying the orders of my commander-in-chief." Three days later came a third order, courteous as before, but peremptory. Keith was about to chase Bruix out of the Mediterranean and Nelson must "repair to Minorca, with the whole, or the greater part, of the force under your Lordship's command." This was accompanied by a private letter, written in the friendliest terms : " You must, therefore, either come or send Duckworth, to govern himself as circumstances offer, until I can determine to a certainty the intentions of the enemy." So Nelson sent Duckworth to Minorca with four of the line.

Keith had left the Mediterranean in pursuit of the combined French and Spanish fleets. Nelson was, therefore, temporary Commander-in-Chief, and nothing more happened for some months, when an official and a private letter arrived from Spencer admonishing him in the mildest terms, firstly for disobeying Keith and secondly for employing 1,000 men on a purely land enterprise when their presence might at any moment be required afloat. On 31st July, Capua and Gaeta surrendered to Troubridge, who on Nelson's recommendation was soon after created a baronet ; and at a state dinner on board the *Foudroyant* the King drank Nelson's health to the accompaniment of a royal salute of twenty-one guns from the Neapolitan ships and forts, and all the ships in the harbour were gorgeously illuminated. " This must not make you think me vain," he wrote to Fanny. " No, very far from it ; I relate it more from gratitude than envy."

Four days later he took the King and the Hamiltons back to Palermo and was created

Duke of Brontë in Sicily. The estates attached to the title were said to be worth £3,000 a year and Nelson at once made generous allotments from them to his family. He remained at Palermo for the rest of the year with the exception of a short visit to Minorca to procure military assistance for the capture of Malta, still blockaded by Ball. The position was unsatisfactory, for although Ferdinand had regained his territory, he refused to return to Naples, even when Captain Louis made the position doubly safe by driving the French from Rome. Nelson, therefore, must also stay at Palermo with his flag flying in a transport.

In January, 1800, Lord Keith returned to the Mediterranean and reassumed the command. Nelson went to meet him at Leghorn, where they made plans to intercept a French squadron at Toulon, said to be fitting out for the relief of Malta. They sailed south through the Straits of Messina, Keith assuming command of the Malta blockade and sending Nelson to cruise off the south-east of Sicily. Nelson, however, ignored orders and cruised off the north-west instead, and on 18th February sighted the French squadron. The only line-of-battle ship in it was the *Généreux*, a survivor of the Nile, and Nelson had great satisfaction in capturing her after an exciting chase. Keith praised Nelson in his despatch without alluding to his disobedience, but on sailing north to Genoa to co-operate with the Austrians, ordered Nelson to take charge of the blockade of Malta, his proper duty.

Nelson refused to obey and returned to Palermo, pleading bad health and left Troubridge block-

ading Malta. "I am absolutely exhausted," he wrote to Keith, and "my state of health is very precarious." He was furious at being passed over for a second time and again announced his desire to retire from the service.

In March, Captain Berry in the *Foudroyant* captured the *Guillaume Tell*, the last survivor of the Nile, just as she was breaking out of Malta, and Nelson felt that the original task allotted him by St. Vincent had at last been accomplished by "*We of the Nile*." In the summer he received Admiralty permission to return home, since his health prevented him carrying out his duties. He was not superseded and Spencer's private letter was a model of tact and sympathy : "I am quite clear, and I believe I am joined in opinion by all your friends here, that you are more likely to recover your health and strength in England than in an inactive situation at a foreign Court, however pleasing the respect and gratitude shown to you for your services may be." Meanwhile, Hamilton was recalled, his lethargy having become a byword. So these three, "*Tria juncta in uno*," as they called themselves, decided to go home together. Keith would not allow the *Foudroyant* to leave the Mediterranean and suggested a frigate or a troopship, but Emma scorned such transport and they therefore decided to travel by land, in company with the Queen and her children bound for Vienna. Emma's mother, long dignified by the name of Mrs. Cadogan, and Miss Cornelia Knight, the authoress, also accompanied them. The whole party sailed in the *Foudroyant* to Leghorn where, on 13th July, 1800, Nelson struck his flag.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BALTIC

The journey home - London - Fanny - visits Beckford - quarrel with Fanny - goes to sea - Josiah - birth of Horatia - "Mrs. Thomson" - Baltic expedition - the Armed Neutrality - plans and reconnaissance - Battle of Copenhagen - the Armistice - Nelson in command - Reval - comes home - the Channel command.

THE early stages of the journey home were hazardous and depressing. After a painful overland trek to Ancona, during which the whole cavalcade were nearly captured by the French and a wheel came off the coach which carried Nelson and the Hamiltons, they sailed in Russian ships to Trieste. The weather was bad, the ships crank, the crews incompetent and the accommodation vile ; Nelson was sea-sick all the way and Hamilton nearly died.

After a magnificent farewell entertainment at Vienna, the English party continued their journey down the Elbe by way of Prague, Dresden, Magdeburg and Hamburg. At every halt they were received with royal honours, much to the surprise and envy of certain English tourists and diplomats. But, although their progress produced a most exuberant outburst of Central European enthusiasm, it was nevertheless "the most ill-advised step Nelson and the Hamiltons could have taken."

"They were, indeed, quite ignorant of the

prejudice which they would be called upon to combat. They deemed themselves children of the world by virtue of their association with great events, great persons, and a great career ; but of our island world they had grown curiously forgetful. . . . They had lived in a hot-house ; they were going into a fog.”<sup>1</sup>

Embarking from Cuxhaven, they landed at Yarmouth and proceeded, amidst scenes of the utmost popular enthusiasm, by way of Ipswich and Colchester to London. Nelson drove through the City in full uniform, with the Hamiltons, to Nerot’s Hotel in King Street, St. James’s, where they met Fanny and his father. For several days official business and official receptions filled up the time. The Hamiltons dined with the Nelsons and the Nelsons dined with the Hamiltons, they all went to the theatre, and Nelson went to a Guildhall banquet and took his seat in the House of Lords. But there was trouble right from the start.

On Nelson’s instructions, Davison had taken a house for him for a year, No. 17, Dover Street.

Fanny, the neglected faithful wife, was completely nonplussed by Nelson’s and Emma’s behaviour. For months and months she had been haunted by rumours, including excerpts from French newspaper quoted in the English press. Her whole nature was outraged by her first impression of Emma’s unconventional exuberance ; she could not cap stories about kings and queens and cabinets and had no desire to do so even if she could. Faded, sensitive and prematurely aged, she was hardly less suited to

<sup>1</sup> Walter Sickel, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*

play the part of a returned hero's wife than to play that of an admiral's wife at a Mediterranean court. Emma, on her part, showed no tact ; she would not keep in the background nor resist the temptation to be seen in public at Nelson's side. Soon she was forced to create the fiction that Fanny was an unloving and unlovely mischief-maker who did nothing for "Jove" but hamper his career. Nelson, for his part, attempted to carry things off with an awkward mixture of delicacy and heartiness, but he must have felt chilled by Fanny's dumb, unyielding censure and exasperated by her refusal to be friends with those whose love and friendship he now prized beyond all else. Realising, too, that influential London opinion was inclined to sympathise with Fanny, "he felt irritated, and took it up in an unfortunate manner by devoting himself more and more to her [Emma for] the purpose of what he called supporting her."<sup>1</sup> Emma's position was certainly embarrassing, since she was neither received at Court nor in Society, while men such as St. Vincent and Troubridge openly regretted Nelson's entanglement.

At Christmas he and the Hamiltons visited William Beckford, the eccentric and wealthy owner of Fonthill. The journey, the entertainment and the return were on royal lines, with crowds of sightseers, civic receptions and parades of yeomanry. But Fanny was left behind in London, where Nelson rejoined her. One morning at breakfast—when his solicitor, William Haslewood, was present—there was a sharp quarrel at the end of which Fanny walked out

<sup>1</sup> Cornelia Knight's *Autobiography*.

of the house. They never lived together again, though they met once more a few days later.

Nelson himself must have been feeling particularly overwrought, for at this moment he was expecting the birth of his and Emma's child. Yet, despite his passionate desire to be near her at such a moment, he had already asked for employment, and on the very day Fanny left him he set out to hoist his flag at Plymouth in the *San Josef*, his capture at the Battle of St. Vincent. His conduct on this occasion should for ever dispel the idea that he allowed his love for Emma to deflect him from what he considered to be his duty as a naval officer. That night, on reaching Southampton, he wrote to Fanny : "We are arrived, and heartily tired ; and with kindest regards to my father and all the family, believe me your affectionate Nelson."

Emma, far from showing contrition, gloried in the humiliation of her rival and her rival's son. "Tom Tit [Fanny] in the country," she wrote to Nelson's sister-in-law. "The Cub [Josiah] called yesterday, but I did not see him, thank God. They are a vile set, Tom Tit and the Cub, hated by everybody." Josiah was, of course, very troublesome ; he had not profited by his over-early promotion, and in the service he was considered a bad officer, quarrelsome when drunk and by no means pleasant when sober. Recently he had given great offence by his truculent though justifiable championing of Fanny.

On 29th January, 1801, Horatia was born at 23 Piccadilly and within a week had been removed by Emma herself to the care of a nurse.

With amazing courage, Emma concealed the whole business from her friends and possibly even from Hamilton, keeping her room for only a few days on the plea of petty illness.

Meanwhile, at Plymouth, Nelson began a hectic correspondence with her about a "Mrs. Thomson" in whom Emma was interested and whose "friend" was one of Nelson's officers. "He," the friend, "hopes the time may not be far distant when he may be united for ever to the object of his wishes, his only, *only* love. He swears before heaven he will marry you [sic] as soon as it is possible, which he fervently prays may be soon." Nelson was also agitated by the Prince of Wales' wish to dine with the Hamiltons, in order to hear Emma sing. "I know his aim is to have you as his mistress," Nelson wrote, and "God strike him blind if he looks at you. . . . May God blast him! Be firm!" Luckily the meeting never took place.

From now onwards Nelson made a point of refusing all invitations to entertainments on shore and did his best never to leave his ship, all as a proof of his faithfulness to Emma. He lived abstemiously and drank nothing but water at dinner, though, later in the evenings, Troubridge, Hardy and Edward Parker would join him in a bumper to "Mrs. Thomson" and her child.

Very soon some important naval changes took place, St. Vincent going to the Admiralty as First Lord and bringing Troubridge with him as member of the Board. Nelson was ordered to join Admiral Sir Hyde Parker at Yarmouth, as second-in-command of an expedition to the Baltic. On his way round in the *St. George* he stopped at

Portsmouth and gave the "friend" three days' leave for London to visit the Admiralty. And so for the first time he saw Horatia, the child of his dreams. On returning to his ship he wrote to Emma, "I love, I never did love anyone else. . . . My longing for you both person and conversation you may readily imagine. What must be my sensations at the idea of sleeping with you! . . . My love, my darling angel, my heaven-given wife." "That other chap," referring to Greville, "did throw away the most precious jewel that God Almighty ever sent on this earth." He made a new will leaving Emma £3,000 and an additional £2,276 owed him by Hamilton. At the same time he informed Fanny that he would use his influence to get Josiah a ship : "I have done *all* for him, and he may again, as he has done before, wish me to break my neck, and be abetted in it by his friends who are likewise my enemies ; but I have done my duty as an honest, generous man, and I neither want nor wish anybody to care what becomes of me, whether I return or am left in the Baltic. Living, I have done all in my power for you, and if dead, you will find I have done the same ; therefore my wish is to be left to myself." Meanwhile he had paid £420 into Fanny's banking account.

Nelson was, as usual, delighted with his new opportunity for acquiring "a little more fame." But when he arrived at Yarmouth he was in a distinctly worried mood and began to work it off by writing a series of very intimate and highly irregular letters to Troubridge at the Admiralty. "The *London*," he wrote of Parker's flagship, "has

only been arrived eighteen hours, and, as yet, there has not been time to shift the flag. This is the pace we Baltic gents go at. Consider how nice it must be laying abed with a young wife compared to a damned raw cold wind." Hyde Parker, who was sixty-one, had just married for the second time.

Nevertheless, Nelson's impatience was amply justified, for Russia, Sweden, Denmark and Prussia had lately formed an "Armed Neutrality" with the object of resisting the restrictions placed upon their trade by Great Britain. These restrictions took the form of the "visit and search" of all neutral ships entering or leaving the ports of France or of France's allies in order to discover the presence of contraband goods. Britain also refused to admit the claim made by the neutrals that shipbuilding materials were not contraband of war. The value of Britain's Baltic trade was enormous and Sweden was the chief producer of naval stores. Similar trouble had arisen in past wars, but now it was aggravated by the threat of the neutrals to use their navies aggressively in the defence of their merchant shipping. The British Cabinet realised that a naval force must be sent at once to the Baltic in order to prevent the junction of the neutral fleets, which though individually negligible, could together be formidable.

Hyde Parker was, therefore, given seventeen of the line, eleven frigates and a strong flotilla. His instructions were to force Denmark and Sweden to abandon the alliance by diplomacy and, if necessary, by force. If necessary, he was to destroy the Russian forces at Kronstadt and

Reval. Nelson and Hyde Parker won the first round when they appeared on the Danish coast before any of Denmark's allies could come to her assistance. The Danes, realising that they alone must bear the brunt of the British attack and despairing of their chances in a fleet action, decided to concentrate all their efforts on the defence of Copenhagen. They therefore withdrew their ships to within a mile of the city and anchored them in a line close in-shore, trusting that the support of shore and island batteries and the extreme difficulty of the navigation would make their position impregnable.

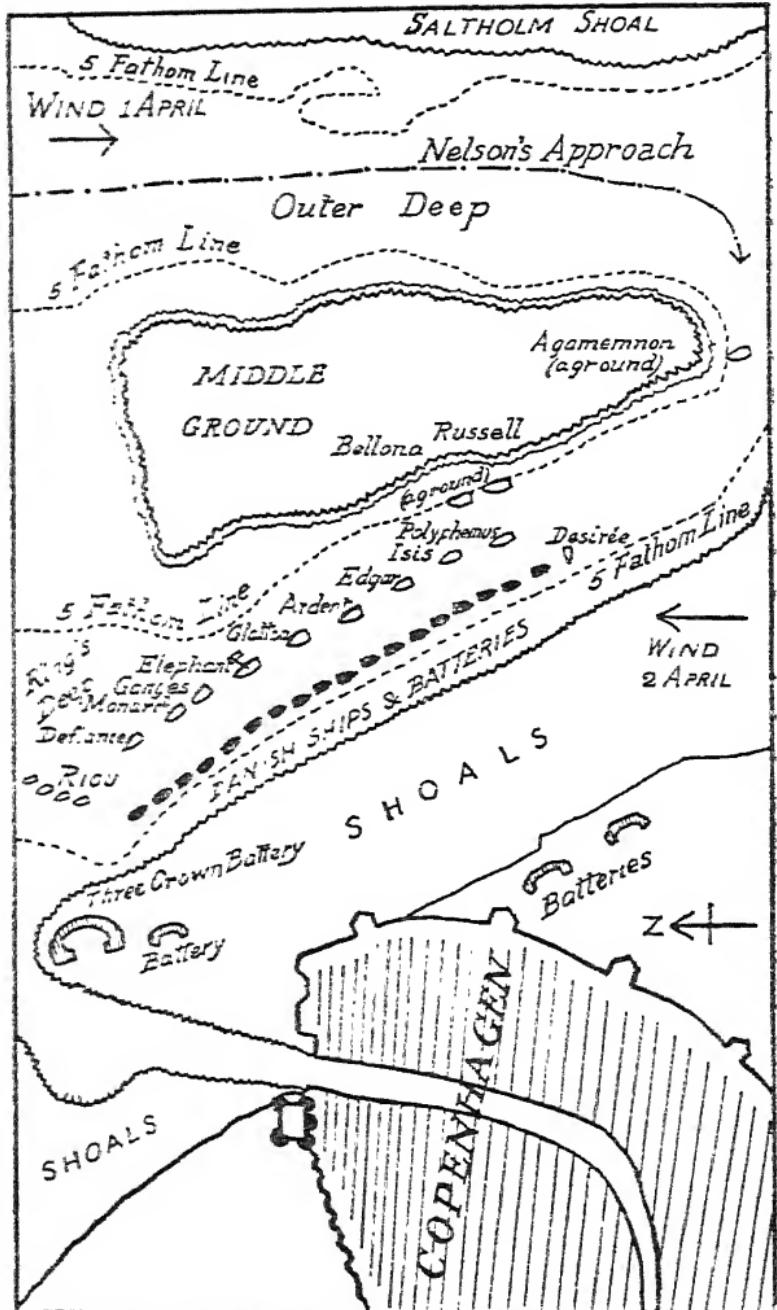
There was a short pause while Nicholas Vansittart, the British envoy, went ashore to negotiate and the admirals conferred together. Copenhagen stands on two islands having in front of them a large shoal known as the Middle Ground, with a channel between known as the King's Deep. Nelson wished to enter the Baltic either by the Sound or the Belt and to attack the Danes from the south or inner end of the King's Deep, thus taking them in reverse and cutting them off from Russian and Swedish support. In addition he advocated despatching a squadron at once to attack the Russians at Reval. Vansittart's mission having failed, the British fleet passed the Sound on 30th March, and next day, at a council of war, Hyde Parker accepted Nelson's offer to conduct an attack from the southern end of the King's Deep, by passing round the outside of the Middle Ground. But he would not agree to an immediate attack on Reval. On the morning of 1st April the senior officers reconnoitred the position and buoys were laid out to mark the

line of approach, since the Danes had removed all sea marks.

Shortly after midday, Nelson moved south with his force, which consisted of twelve of the line, four frigates and a number of gunboats, and with his flag in the *Elephant* (74), which was of shallower draught than the *St. George* (90).

The first business was to reach the southern end of the King's Deep, which was successfully accomplished that night by passing the channel known as the Outer Deep running between the Middle Ground and a still larger shoal enclosing the island of Saltholm. Nelson was now within two miles of the city, but no effort was made to interfere with him, and Captain Hardy actually rowed round the nearest Danish ship after dark, quietly taking soundings with a pole. That night Nelson gave a large dinner-party in the *Elephant*, and later began to draw up his orders for the attack, assisted by Captains Riou and Foley. Hardy returned at eleven, and the orders were completed by one in the morning, when the clerks began to copy them, not finishing till six. Nelson lay in his cot encouraging their efforts and receiving reports till about five, when he dressed and had breakfast. The wind which had carried his ships south the day before had changed and was favourable for passing through the King's Deep towards the north, so that there was no time to lose.

The ships of the line were to distribute themselves along the front of the seventeen Danish ships and floating batteries, and anchor by the stern, while three frigates and the flotilla under Captain Edward Riou were to engage the



BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN, 2<sup>nd</sup> APRIL, 1801.

formidable island battery at the northern end known as the Three Crown. The *Desirée* frigate was to rake the bows of the leading Danish warship, and as soon as the four leading ships were subdued, the two British ships of the line attacking them were to pass to the head of the British line near Riou. Hyde Parker, with the remainder of the fleet, took station north of the King's Deep, where he was wind-bound and of little use for support.

There was an awful moment of hesitation when the pilots, mostly mates of small traders, said that they could not take the squadron through—a natural feeling, since pilots are solely concerned with safety. At nine-thirty the attack began, with the *Edgar* leading and piloted by the master of the *Bellona*. Despite Nelson's preparations, the *Agamemnon*, *Russell* and *Bellona* all ran on the Middle Ground and he himself probably saved further disaster by passing these ships on the west side contrary to his original orders. The battle began at 10 a.m. and gradually developed until the whole Danish line was engaged. The British ships anchored by the stern as they took station, and were about 100 yards from each other and 200 yards from the enemy. By 1 p.m. the fighting became intense, for the Danes were using their ships practically as floating batteries, and boatloads of men continually rowed out from the shore to replace the casualties. Hyde Parker, unable to see exactly what was happening, but fearing that the Danish resistance was too strong, now signalled Nelson to discontinue the action. It has sometimes been asserted that this signal, was only meant to be permissive and that possibly

Nelson knew it. But beyond acknowledging the signal, he ignored it completely and strictly ordered that his own signal for close action should be kept flying.

By 2 p.m. the head of the Danish line was crushed, as Nelson had intended, but although the Danish ships struck their colours, it was impossible to take possession of them because they and the land batteries continued to fire on all boats which approached them, while fresh boatloads of men still rowed out to the shore for their defence.

At 2.30 p.m. Nelson sent ashore a letter under a flag of truce to the Crown Prince :

*"To the Brothers of Englishmen, The Danes.*

"Lord Nelson has directions to spare Denmark, when no longer resisting ; but if firing is continued on the part of Denmark, Lord Nelson will be obliged to set on fire all the Floating-batteries he has taken, without having the power to save the brave Danes who have defended them."

On receipt of this letter the Danish Adjutant-General came off to see Nelson and Hyde Parker. Soon all firing ceased, and by sunset a twenty-four hours' armistice was signed allowing Nelson to withdraw all his ships and prizes from the King's Deep. Nelson took great pains afterwards to deny the charge that his letter was a *ruse de guerre*, claiming that humanity alone had prompted him. "Nelson is a warrior," he wrote to Emma, "but will not be a butcher." The basis of the charge was that, owing to Riou's

force having been completely repulsed by the Three Crown Battery and Riou himself killed, the battery would have severely handled the ships of the line further astern had they tried to withdraw from the King's Deep before firing ceased. Several of them, moreover, were now aground, incapable of being floated without the help of the ships' boats from Hyde Parker's division, which would thus have to make a double journey past the battery. The threat to the Danes, however, of fire ships, followed doubtless by a close-range bombardment of the city by gunboats, was much greater than the threat of the Three Crown Battery to Nelson.

The week following the battle was spent in discussing terms for extending the armistice. Meanwhile it was kept in being on a day to-day basis. Hyde Parker allowed Nelson to conduct the negotiations. Nelson records that at an interview with the Crown Prince he criticised the aims and methods of the Armed Neutrality in a very free manner, "and I believe I told him such truths as seldom reach the ears of princes." "The people received me as they always have done: and even the stairs of the palace were crowded, huzzaing and saying, 'God bless Lord Nelson.'" The version of Colonel Stewart, commanding the expedition's troops, who accompanied him on shore, was rather different. "The populace showed a mixture of admiration, curiosity and displeasure. A strong guard secured his safety, and appeared necessary to keep off the mob, whose rage, although mixed with admiration at his thus thrusting himself amongst them, was naturally to be expected." On 9th April, Nelson

and Stewart signed an armistice to last fourteen weeks. By it the Danes agreed to abandon the Armed Neutrality and to supply the British fleet with provisions. Such a feat of arms and diplomacy could never have been accomplished except by an officer of great experience in navigation and fighting, and prepared to accept military and diplomatic responsibilities of the gravest kind. Hyde Parker was not the only man then or since who might have failed in such an exacting task. As had happened on previous occasions and particularly after the Nile, Nelson's immense expenditure of vital energy was followed by a bout of terrible depression, "Thomson" informing Emma that he was "in great pain" and "totally disabled."

Nelson stayed at Copenhagen to refit and send to England the worst injured ships and the prizes, while the fleet passed on to Kjöge Bay. When about to follow, he found that the *St. George* drew too much water, and hearing that the Swedish fleet was at sea, insisted on being rowed thirty miles in a boat to catch up the *Elephant*, and set off in such a hurry that he forgot his greatcoat and refused to go back for it. The cold was intense. "We Mediterranean people are not used to it," he wrote to Emma. The Swedes, however, withdrew to Karlskrona and gave friendly assurances, and news arrived that the Czar of Russia had been murdered and that the new régime was likely to reverse the pro-French policy. At this moment Hyde Parker received his recall, with orders to hand over the command to Nelson, who at once sailed for Reval with ten of the line, arguing that if the Russian were in

two minds the appearance of the British fleet would settle the matter. Besides, he wished to prevent the Russians uniting their fleet at Reval with their fleet at Kronstadt, which they would certainly do when the ice melted. A week later he was off Reval, but the Russians had cut their way out of the ice and sailed while the new Czar was inclined to regard the appearance of the British fleet as an intrusion. So after exchanges of equivocal courtesies, Nelson withdrew, full of complaints about unjust suspicions.

Now that all chance of fighting was over he again became deeply depressed and longed for home. His left eye had become increasingly troublesome and he was anxious about Emma. He had also become involved in a most unfortunate quarrel with St. Vincent over Mediterranean prize-money. He was made a Viscount for his Baltic services, but there were no votes of thanks from Parliament or the City and there were no medals. The Cabinet were anxious not to humiliate the Danes by any hint of warlike triumph, but Nelson never forgave the lack of recognition shown to his officers and men. He was relieved at his own request by Sir Charles Pole, and in a farewell message to the fleet attributed its health to the good discipline "of every individual in it," a remarkably democratic expression, especially as he definitely excepted from his praise the officers of three of the small ships.

Nelson landed at Yarmouth on 1st July and joined the Hamiltons at Shepperton, where the party included Nelson's brother, the Rev. William Nelson and his wife. Here he also received a magnanimous letter of congratulation from Fanny.

But within a month of his return he was given command of a large force of frigates and flotilla ships cruising between Orfordness and Beachy Head. His instructions were to prevent an invasion by a force of several hundred sloops, gunboats and smaller ships, plus 40,000 troops concentrated in the area of Flushing and the Pas de Calais. After cruising up and down the coast, reconnoitring enemy ports and writing long memoranda on the defence of London and the constitution of the Sea Fencibles, he came to the conclusion that the enemy's schemes were quite impracticable. He therefore abandoned his purely defensive rôle and organised a boat attack on Boulogne with the object of capturing and bringing out the large flotilla stationed there. The attack was executed on the night of 16th August, but despite great bravery was defeated with heavy loss, the French having moored their vessels to the shore and to each other with chains. Nelson could not lead the attack in person, but he characteristically accepted the full responsibility, telling St. Vincent that "No person can be blamed for sending them to the attack but myself." He was greatly upset by the reverse, his first since Santa Cruz, and especially at the heavy casualties, including Captain Edward Parker, bearer of many of the "Thomson" letters, who died of wounds.

The signing of Preliminaries of Peace on 4th October put an end to his plans for a further attack, but he was not given leave for eighteen days. This so infuriated him that he completely lost his temper with the Admiralty and especially with his protégé Troubridge : "What a set of beasts!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TWO YEARS' BLOCKADE

Nelson buys Merton — lives there with the Hamiltons — visit to Greville — death of Hamilton — Nelson made Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean — the *Victory* — failure of the Peace of Amiens — the blockade of Toulon — health of the fleet — Nelson's life afloat — situation at Toulon — Bonaparte's invasion scheme — Nelson's trap — Ville-neuve sails and avoids the trap.

FOR some months past Emma had been looking round for “a good *lodging* in an airy situation,” to which she and Sir William and Nelson might retire and live a semi-country life. Just before peace was signed they bought Merton Place for £6,000, and it was here that Nelson repaired when he at last obtained leave. The house was a substantial brick building situated in what is now a part of Wimbledon, but which was then the country village of Merton, though within easy reach of Town. The price of houses rose abruptly after the peace, so that its purchase proved a very good bargain. The whole place was entirely redecorated and the farmery reconstructed. Special care had been taken to lay out the garden, and a tributary of the River Wandle (now a suburban drain) was coaxed into providing a small sheet of ornamental water, spanned by a handsome bridge and garnished with ducks. The gardens which lay on either side of the road, were connected by a tunnel and the whole effect was elegant and agreeable.

Nelson insisted on paying the whole of the total cost, which amounted to £9,000, and borrowed heavily to do so.

The *Tria juncta in uno* shared expenses and entertained lavishly, the Hamiltons still retaining the Piccadilly house for occasional use. Merton became the centre of a strange and varied society. There were Nelson's own relatives, the Rev. William Nelson, his only surviving brother, and Mrs. Susanna Bolton and Mrs. Catherine Mat-cham, his only surviving sisters, and their families, glad enough to accept his hospitality, dispensed by Emma, and angling for "jobs" arising from reflected glory. Nelson's father, the Rector, now aged seventy-nine, also graced Merton with a visit. Then there were Nelson's service and official friends and the Hamilton's English and Italian friends, and finally a general medley of people of all types from the Duke of Queensberry to "Peter Pindar." Trophies of the Nile filled the house to overflowing, and Emma arranged everything so as to emphasise the importance of the hero who inhabited it. But, amidst all this bustle and brilliance, Nelson's life was singularly calm and temperate; he spoke quietly, dressed quietly and behaved quietly, and was most modest about his achievements. Moreover, he was a good neighbour and in company with Emma, dispensed generous charity to the local poor and was constant in his attendance at church. And yet there was something queer and bizarre about the whole *ménage* which bucolic and God-fearing sobriety could not entirely hide and which set many tongues wagging. Such criticism as there was, however, was partly born of jealousy, for

Nelson made it perfectly clear that he did not wish to accept hospitality from the natural leaders of society, or from the Prince of Wales and his associates. These latter were not likely to be put off by the fact that Queen Charlotte had refused to receive Emma at Court, far from it, but Nelson would have nothing to do with them. He also refused to dine with the Lord Mayor and to receive the thanks of the City for his Channel services until the reproach of Copenhagen had been wiped out, and on this point he was most emphatic. He took his seat, however, in the House of Lords as a Viscount, and a few days afterwards seconded a vote of thanks to the naval forces. His total income after he struck his flag in 1802 was about £3,400 a year, but out of this he paid £1,800 a year to Fanny and about £350 to his other relatives, so that, considering his rank and services, he was a poor man. Fanny wrote once again, offering love, oblivion of the past, and a home, but her letter was not even read.

In July, 1802, the *Tria juncta in uno* accepted an invitation to visit Charles Greville at Milford Haven, where he was carrying out some harbour improvements. Nelson had by no means given up his dislike of "that other chap," but the invitation was flattering and Greville was Hamilton's nephew and heir. The journey was an even greater triumph than the one to Fonthill. Oxford gave honorary degrees to Nelson and Hamilton, and along the whole route through Burford, Gloucester, Ross, Monmouth and Carmarthen there were huge crowds and great enthusiasm. At Blenheim the Duke of Marlborough declined to receive them and sent out food for

them to eat in the park, but this lapse into bad manners was unique. In South Wales they had a great reception and returned via Swansea, Chepstow, Monmouth, Ross, Hereford, Worcester, Birmingham and Warwick, having tasted to the full the great draught of hero-worship poured out by every type of man and woman from a wide area of English towns and countryside.

For Hamilton the whole journey must have been a great strain, and even before their return he had become very irritable. He longed for peace and quiet and complained of the way in which Emma devoted herself to Nelson and neglected his "interest." By this he meant not only his special comforts, the comforts of an old man, but also his visits to the British Museum, the Royal Society and the London picture auctions. The quarrel was soon patched up, but Hamilton became more and more infirm, and in April, 1803, he died at 23 Piccadilly in Nelson's and Emma's arms. Their grief was deep and genuine, despite the opportuneness of the event. Hamilton in a codicil to his will left Nelson the picture of Emma by le Brun, "a very small token of the great regard I have for his Lordship, the most virtuous, loyal and truly brave character I ever met with. God bless him, and shame fall on those who do not say Amen." Hamilton had never by the slightest sign shown that he realised the true nature of Nelson's and Emma's relations, though he had written irritably to Greville complaining of Emma's extravagance. Greville secured the major part of his uncle's fortune, Emma being left with £800 a year, but with Nelson's money there was enough for them both.

Horatia was baptised " Horatia Nelson Thomson" and installed at Merton, where special wire-netting was put up to prevent her falling into the " Nile " (Wandle). If only Fanny had died or had been able to bring divorce proceedings, they could have been married ; but Fanny could do neither. As long as Nelson lived she hoped for reconciliation. Yet, even so, life was easy until May, when England declared war on France, and Nelson was appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. Two days later he set out from Merton at four in the morning and hoisted his flag the same day at Portsmouth in the *Victory*.

By the peace of Amiens the States lying east of France were to be left undisturbed to work out their own salvations. But, as the majority were already under some kind of republican government, there was every temptation for Bonaparte to include them in the French system, and very soon his agents were so actively at work in Italy, Switzerland, Holland and the Rhine Provinces that the terms of the treaty were being obviously violated. Great Britain, in retaliation, refused to withdraw the garrison from Malta (captured by Ball in 1800), then destined to be restored to the Knights. In consequence, Bonaparte was able to accuse Great Britain of a lesser but more obvious breach of the treaty. Realising that a rupture was inevitable, Britain took the initiative and declared war on France.

Nelson's instructions were "to proceed off Toulon," and "to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy" all French ships. He was to keep a careful eye on Spain, then neutral, and on no account to allow any Spanish ships of war to

enter a French port or to join the French at sea. Hurrying to the Mediterranean in the *Amphion* frigate, the *Victory* being still unready for sea, he was not properly installed in his flagship till the end of July. The ships already on the station consisted of only nine of the line, foul from want of cleaning, with their crews weak in numbers and far from healthy, a force hardly capable of stopping a French sortie. Nelson at once set to work to turn them into a first-class fighting-machine. His chief difficulty was that he had no base, Gibraltar and Malta being too far, and Minorca having been ceded to Spain by the Treaty of Amiens. Provisions had to be purchased on the coasts of Spain and Sardinia and brought by sea, and when water ran short the squadron had had to raise the blockade and go in a body to Maddalena on the north coast of Sardinia. Nelson's other difficulty was that he was unable to maintain a constant margin of superiority with which to encounter the French at their "selected" moment for putting to sea, because they gradually increased their force inside Toulon whilst his own remained practically the same. Many blockades had been instituted in this and in previous wars, but never for such a long duration, with so small a force and with so few resources.

Nelson's first business was to improve the health of his men, and this he did chiefly by giving immediate administrative effect to the hygienic reforms suggested many years previously by Doctor Lind and Sir Gilbert Blane. Fresh meat, fresh vegetables and fruit, particularly onions and lemons, were purchased to supplement the salt

meat rations and ship's biscuits so unsavoury and intolerable in the Mediterranean, whilst advantage was taken of the locality to provide good wine in place of spirits. All rules regarding the ventilation, drying and cleaning of the interior of the ships were rigidly enforced and no idling or drunkenness was permitted, but music, dancing and acting were encouraged.

His own life in the *Victory* was orderly and tranquil, and he was the centre of a real happy family, such as was then seldom found in a ship of war and not often is to-day. He was up before the sun, gazing anxiously towards Toulon for any sign of a frigate's signal, and generally finished all the routine business of the fleet by eight o'clock, *à la St. Vincent*.

The Rev. Alexander John Scott, his Chaplain, who was also interpreter, translator and secret-service man, was the humorist of the party, and was led on by Nelson to argue about navigation and other practical matters in a way which recalls later war-time leisure described in *The Silence of Colonel Bramble*. All this time he was as much in love with Emma as ever, writing his letters beneath her picture, and in October, 1803, he wrote to Horatia, explaining that he had just added a codicil to his will leaving her £4,000, Emma to act as guardian and trustee. At the end of February, Emma apparently gave birth to a second child, the "little Emma," who died in the following July.

The perpetual problem of Nelson's life was where would the French make for if they came out? His own view was that they would go southwest to the Straits, and perhaps from there to

Ireland, and his object in conducting the blockade was not to keep them in, but to make sure of defeating them if they came out. With regard to Naples and Sicily, he still held that the denial of these territories to the French was an essential part of British strategy, and he was supported in this view by the Cabinet, who even went so far as to plan combined operations in Southern Italy with Russian co-operation. Meanwhile the French showed no sign, although they massed troops on the north coast of France and there was much talk of an invasion.

For some time past Bonaparte had been putting pressure on Spain to open her ports to French ships, and "she had for long worn her neutrality to shreds." Pitt, the new British Prime Minister, took the initiative by ordering Spanish treasure-ships to be seized and, in November, Spain declared war. Again those long sweeps of Mediterranean and Atlantic coast became hostile, and the adherence of the Dutch to France strained British naval forces to the utmost. But instead of the Mediterranean fleet's being withdrawn, a special squadron was created under Sir John Orde, to watch Cadiz, while Nelson was instructed to keep his original station off Toulon. This arrangement, although strategically sound, irritated Nelson, since Cadiz had always been part of the Mediterranean command, and to take it away tended to deprive his own fleet of their share of much prize-money.

Meanwhile a fresh squadron had to be found for the blockade of Ferrol and Coruña, which with those already stationed off Brest, Rochefort and Toulon, completed the British grip on the naval

bases of France and Spain. Pitt still hoped for Russian co-operation in South Italy and was preparing an expedition of troops for the purpose, but the Czar, who had recently been irregularly elected Grand Master by a remnant of the Knights of Malta then exiled in Russia, refused to move unless Malta was evacuated by the British and restored to the Order.

Bonaparte now began to weave together his schemes for the attack against England. Knowing that he was surrounded by spies, he deliberately befogged the situation by issuing several bogus schemes, so that his real thoughts are difficult to follow. In January, 1805, the Rochefort squadron under Missiessy put to sea and reached the West Indies, the British blockade having been temporarily withdrawn. On the 17th Admiral Villeneuve also put to sea from Toulon, carrying a force of troops, Nelson having withdrawn to Maddalena. He was shadowed, however, by Nelson's frigates till off Corsica, where after meeting extremely bad weather which his raw officers and crews by no means relished, he retired to Toulon at the end of four days. On receiving from his frigates the news of Villeneuve's sortie, Nelson at once ran down the east side of Sardinia in order to protect Naples and Sicily. Hearing nothing further, he assumed that the French had sailed to Egypt, and decided to follow them as in 1798. But this time it was a false scent, and after finding no sign of them at Alexandria he returned to continue the blockade.

Bonaparte had now completed the final and secret details of his invasion scheme. Ninety thousand troops lay on the north coast of France,

but could not cross the Channel without the cover of a battle fleet. No French battleships were stationed in the Channel, because the ports there were incapable of holding them. Battleships, therefore, must be brought from elsewhere. Previous schemes had failed because the British had beaten the battleships before they could reach the Channel ports occupied by the troops, let alone hold the passage of the Channel while the troops crossed in safety. Bonaparte had studied the reasons for these failures and had devised a new scheme. Missiessy was already in the West Indies ; Ganteaume was to break out of Brest and join him there, picking up the French and Spanish ships at Ferrol and driving off the British force blockading it. Villeneuve should also go to the West Indies, picking up the Cadiz ships on the way and driving off Orde. The whole combined force of French and Spanish ships would then return to Europe under Gauteaume, force the entrance of the Channel, reach Boulogne, cover the embarkation and crossing of the troops, and hold the communications. Meanwhile the British, utterly surprised and dumbfounded, would be dispersed in all directions, chasing phantoms. Cornwallis, off Ushant, and the British ships in the Channel would be outnumbered and defeated. The scheme implied that the exits to the West Indies should be nicely synchronised and that the British should display a high degree of accomodating stupidity.

Nelson also had a scheme. He knew that Villeneuve was again about to put to sea, and he again suspected that his object would be either Sardinia, Naples, Sicily or Egypt. Nelson therefore

prepared a trap. First of all he withdrew the whole of his force except two frigates and showed himself off Barcelona, on 17th March, in order to discourage Villeneuve from sailing west along the Spanish coast. Then he went over to the Gulf of Palmas at the southern end of Sardinia and lay in wait. Assuming that Villeneuve's objective lay south-east, his own position could hardly have been bettered. On 31st March he moved a few miles east to Pula and still waited. Just as he had hoped, Villeneuve put to sea on 30th March with a strong northerly wind and ran straight south in order to avoid Barcelona, where Nelson's appearance had been duly reported. If only he had kept his course he would have been caught, for the two frigates, after shadowing him for a day, had gone off to warn Nelson. But on the morning of 31st March he met a merchant ship from Ragusa which told him that Nelson was off Palmas. Instantly realising the trap into which he was plunging, Villeneuve turned west and passed the Balearic Islands on the Spanish side.

The campaign of Trafalgar had begun.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CAMPAIGN OF TRAFALGAR

Villeneuve's movements - Nelson learns and follows - Villeneuve leaves Europe - Nelson's dilemma - the *Ampthion* decides - Villeneuve in the West Indies - Nelson's pursuit - enemy south? - Villeneuve and Nelson return to Europe - Blettesworth's discovery - Barham's decision - Villeneuve and Calder - Nelson at Merton - Villeneuve at Cadiz - Nelson leaves England.

ON 4th April, Nelson, learning from his frigates that Villeneuve was at sea, south-by-west of Toulon, instantly took station between Sardinia and Galita. Nothing happened, and fearing that Villeneuve had doubled back round the east side of Corsica and Sardinia, he shifted his station to fifty miles north of Palermo. Still nothing happened, and it was now April 15th. Just at that moment Nelson learnt that troops under Gen. Craig, destined for Southern Italy, had sailed from England, and immediately jumped to the conclusion that Villeneuve knew of their coming and had gone to intercept them. Nelson was infuriated and cursed the Cabinet, the Admiralty and everyone concerned. What business had they to send such an easy prize with only a small escort and not warn him in advance? Now, to increase his misfortune, the wind turned west and blew so hard that he could make no headway whatever beyond Sardinia, and on 18th April he learnt, for certain, that Villeneuve had passed the Straits on the 8th, ten days ahead of

him. Next he heard that Villeneuve "had been to Cadiz and left again with some Spanish ships in company"; but where for? Nelson guessed Brest or Ireland, and beat slowly westward towards the Straits, more angry than before. On 4th May he was in Tetuan, but could gain no further news. What had happened to Orde? Commissioner Otway from Gibraltar suggested that Villeneuve's destination was the West Indies, but this at first seemed unlikely. Leaving all his frigates except four with Sir Richard Bickerton<sup>1</sup> to guard against any attack on Sardinia, Naples, Sicily or Egypt, Nelson pressed on towards Lisbon. On 9th May he was off Cape St. Vincent and collected a variety of intelligence.

Villeneuve had arrived off Cadiz on 9th April, with ten of the line and had signalled the Spanish fleet to come out. As usual they were slow, and after waiting only four hours he was off again, leaving Admiral Gravina to follow as best as he could. Sir John Orde had been taking in stores when Villeneuve appeared, and had very nearly been caught, but had managed to send his store-ships to Lagos and had retired with the bulk of his force to concentrate on the main British fleet off Ushant. Nelson heard all this from Captain Sutton of the *Amphion*, one of Orde's frigates, which had been left behind to observe. Now the *Amphion* had only recently arrived on the station from England and Captain Sutton was able to report that no sign of Villeneuve had been seen anywhere on the way out, nor had any of the ships passed on the way reported enemy movements. Evidently Villeneuve had not gone

<sup>1</sup> Son of the admiral mentioned on page 17.

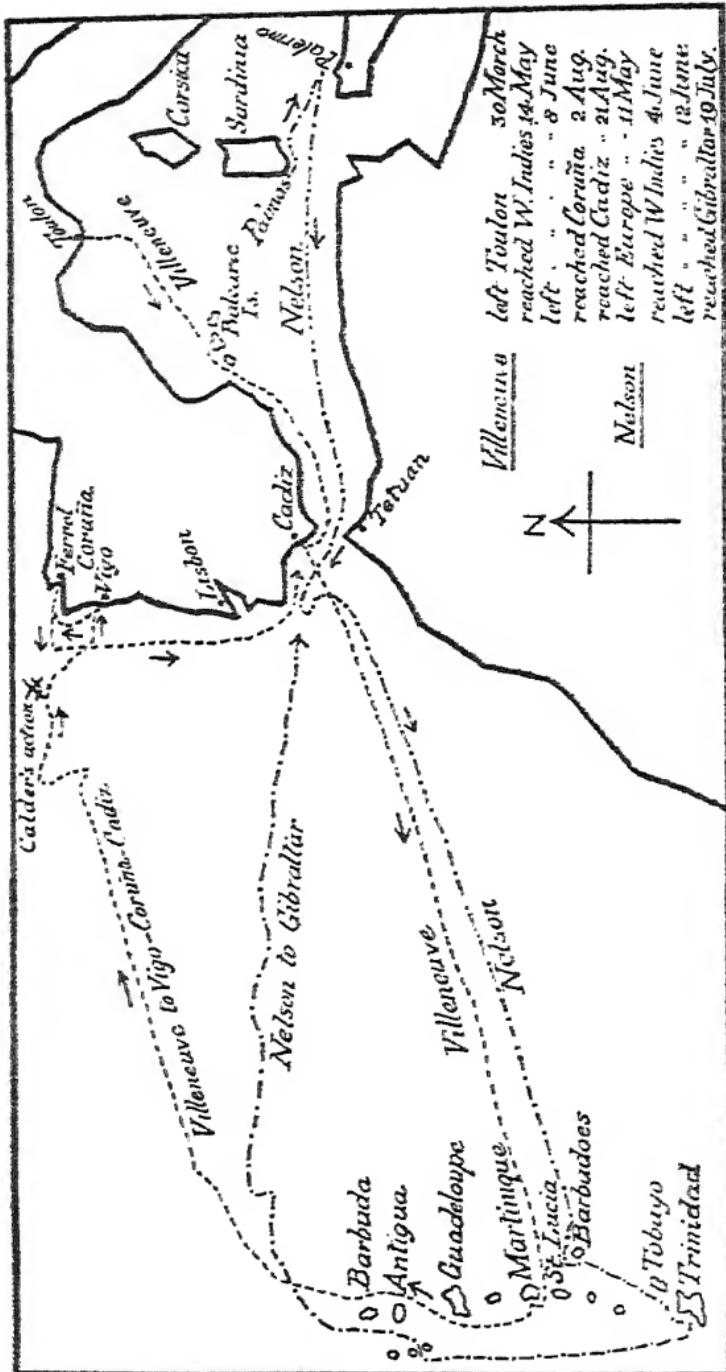
north. Craig's troops, too, for whom Nelson so much feared, had been windbound on the way out and were now safely ensconced in the Tagus. So there was nothing to worry about on their account. An American merchant captain who had left Cadiz on 2nd May reported via a British frigate that Villeneuve's supposed destination was the West Indies.

Here was a mass of facts, most of them negative and all indicating that Villeneuve might have gone to the West Indies, because he had not been sighted to the north and was unlikely to be heading for the Cape of Good Hope or the East Indies. Nelson, therefore, at last made his famous decision to sail to the West Indies himself, and on 11th May left the coast of Europe with ten of the line and three frigates, after filling up with provisions from Orde's store-ships. No action of his has been more misinterpreted, it being often supposed that his decision resulted from some peculiar gift of second sight. On the contrary, it was based entirely on evidence logically weighed and carefully sifted, and only acted upon after considerable delay and much anxious thought.

Villeneuve and Gravina reached the West Indies on 14th May and made straight for Martinique, the principal French base. Missiessy had already returned to Rochefort, but six Spanish and two French warships had come out from Cadiz with Gravina, so that Villeneuve now had a total of eighteen of the line. French officials at Martinique urged an immediate attack on the British islands, preferably Jamaica. Villeneuve's orders were to wait forty days for Ganteaume and then return to Europe, and

meanwhile he had to take precautions against pursuit by Nelson and also against Cochrane's squadron already in the locality. Loath to commit himself to any major operation, Villeneuve spent a fortnight capturing the Diamond Rock held by 100 British seamen. Suddenly fresh orders arrived from Bonaparte, stating that two of the line would soon join him from Rochefort and that thirty-five days afterwards he was to return from the West Indies to Ferrol. While waiting he was to capture as many British islands as possible. Realising that he had so far been wasting his time, Villeneuve made all speed to collect troops at Guadeloupe for an attack on Barbuda. On 6th June he was well on his way and had just passed Antigua when he captured a British convoy and from the prisoners learnt the alarming news that Nelson had reached Barbados. Faced with a combination of Nelson and Cochrane, and being now more than 100 miles north of his base, with scanty stores and a grossly incompetent squadron of Spanish allies, Villeneuve decided that he must sail for Europe at once. Hastily shovelling the local troops into frigates, he swept past Barbuda with his battle fleet, and on 10th June was well out in the Atlantic.

Villeneuve had had a clear start from Europe of thirty-two days and had taken thirty-four days to cross the Atlantic. That is to say, he had reached Martinique only three days after Nelson left Europe. Yet Nelson, despite the bad condition of his ships, had gained ten days on the crossing and had reached Barbados on 4th June. Here he received definite information that



CAMPAIGN OF TRAFALGAR, 1805. NOT TO SCALE.

Villeneuve had been sighted off St. Lucia, which seemed to imply a projected attack either on Barbados or Trinidad. There was no sign of Villeneuve approaching Barbados itself, and Nelson therefore concluded that he must have gone south to Trinidad. Nelson himself would have expected to find the Combined Fleet to the northward, but the intelligence was precise, and he felt bound to act on it.

Next day he sailed south-west with the addition of two of the line and 2,000 troops, and on 7th June, when off Tobago, was completely deceived by a unique coincidence. A local merchant, seeing a fleet approaching the island and anxious to learn its nationality, sent out his clerk in a schooner with orders to reconnoitre and report by private signal ; and very soon the schooner was able to report that the fleet was British. But the combination of flags used for this signal happened to be the naval signal for "Enemy at Trinidad." The British ships, thinking that the schooner was naval or carried some naval officer on board, repeated the signal to the *Victory*, where Nelson immediately made the signal "Prepare for action." In a few hours Trinidad was in sight, and flames and smoke were seen rising from the high ground near the citadel. Evidently, thought Nelson, the enemy had landed and were attacking the garrison, but actually the garrison were burning certain outpost works, thinking that Nelson's fleet was Villeneuve's. The British swept into the bay with the crews standing to their guns and found—nothing.

Nelson was so disappointed that he could not even be angry, and at once ran north, reaching

Antigua on 12th June. Where was Villeneuve now? One piece of information was sufficient for him ; the troops taken by Villeneuve from Guadeloupe had been brought back in the frigates and had disembarked. That was enough, and having landed his own troops at Antigua, Nelson was off after Villeneuve with eleven of the line and only four days astern. On 18th June the rival fleets were less than 200 miles apart, but from then onwards their courses diverged, Villeneuve making for Ferrol and Nelson for Cape St. Vincent with the idea of cutting Villeneuve off from Cadiz. Nelson was off the Cape on 17th July, but could gain no news from the frigate he had sent forward to Lisbon, and therefore put into Gibraltar, where he went ashore for the first time after 721 days at sea. He left again within four days, and just off Tarifa was met by the *Termagant* sloop with important news.

Before leaving the West Indies, Nelson had sent the brig *Curieux* to England with despatches and she had caught up and passed Villeneuve's fleet on 19th June. Her captain, Edmund Bettesworth, had carefully noted Villeneuve's course and position and had then raced home as fast as possible. Realising the tremendous importance of his discovery, Bettesworth had jumped into a post-chaise as soon as he reached Plymouth, and just before midnight on 8th July, had "rattled up to the door of the Admiralty." Sir Charles Middleton, Lord Barham, the new First Lord and late Comptroller of the Navy, a man of great organising ability, had at once divined from Bettesworth's news that Villeneuve could not be

heading for the Mediterranean. He must, instead, be heading either for Brest or Ferrol. Barham had, therefore, made rapid dispositions by which Villeneuve should be intercepted either by Cornwallis off Ushant or by Sir Robert Calder off Ferrol. Part of this news Nelson heard, and on the strength of it he sailed north to join Cornwallis.

Meanwhile, Villeneuve and Gravina were neatly intercepted by Calder, off Ferrol, on 22nd July, but managed to get into Vigo with the loss of two ships. A few days later they slipped out to sea and worked their way round to Ferrol and Coruña. The campaign of Trafalgar had come to a halt.

Nelson missed all the excitement in the Finisterre region by keeping well clear of the coast on his way north from Gibraltar in the hopes of getting a better wind. The news he had received from the *Termagant*, off Tarifa, consisted of a Lisbon newspaper with an account of the arrival of the *Curieux* and the observations she had made of Villeneuve's fleet. Secrecy was not considered so important in those days. Nelson thus learnt a little of what had happened, but not enough to lead him to join Calder. He joined Cornwallis off Ushant on 15th August and was immediately signalled to return to England, in the *Victory*, on leave. He landed at Spithead and drove to Merton, which he reached on 20th August after a campaign of over two years, in which he had chased a superior enemy fleet across the Atlantic and back without ever even sighting them from his own flagship. This was an achievement which appealed irresistibly to his countrymen.

Most of his family were assembled at Merton to greet him, Emma having rushed back from a course of sea-bathing at Southend. He had ministerial interviews in London with Pitt, Canning, Castlereagh and Barham, and paid a compulsory call on the Prince of Wales, but otherwise he remained at Merton, now filled with relatives and friends, and refused all public hospitality. He was very weary mentally and needed a rest ; for long periods of time spent at sea often affect the brain in a peculiar fashion. In addition, he felt that his campaign was only in suspense and that he might be called on again at any moment, and also that he might never return.

On 2nd September, Captain the Hon. Henry Blackwood, of the *Euryalus* frigate, called at Merton on his way to the Admiralty with the news that the Combined Fleet had left Ferrol and had run south to Cadiz. Nelson followed him to London and there was a bustle at the Admiralty. Calder had crossed the Bay to join Cornwallis, and had thus given the enemy their chance to escape. Collingwood, however, now a Vice-Admiral, had been stationed off Cadiz with a small force similar to Orde's. He had watched the enemy's entry and had reported it, and a few days later was joined by Calder with a powerful concentration. Nelson was ordered to resume command of the Mediterranean Fleet, whose main strength was now represented by this force of Calder's blockading Cadiz. Meanwhile Calder himself was ordered to return to England and be tried by court-martial for not preventing the enemy from getting into Cadiz.

In three days' time all Nelson's baggage was

off to Portsmouth, and on "Friday night [13th September] at half-past ten, drove from dear, dear Merton, where I left all that I hold dear in this world, to go to serve my King and Country. May the Great God Whom I adore enable me to fulfil the expectations of my Country, and if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the Throne of His Mercy. If it is His good providence to cut short my days upon earth, I bow with the greatest submission, relying that He will protect those so dear to me that I may leave behind. His will be done. Amen. Amen. Amen."

Next day Nelson hoisted his flag. "I was only twenty-five days, from dinner to dinner, absent from the *Victory*." At noon he went on board, accompanied by Canning and Rose, representing the Ministers, and despite the secrecy of his embarkation, great crowds collected to see his barge row off and give to him a farewell never accorded before or since to any British seaman.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

Nelson rejoins the fleet — the enemy in Cadiz — Nelson's plan — assumption of superiority — Villeneuve at sea — letter to Emma — the fleets in contact — Nelson's prayer and codicil — the tactical approach — the attack — the mêlée — Nelson wounded — Lucas fails — Dumanoir fails — Nelson dies — funeral — earldom — Horatia and Emma.

" THE reception I met with on joining the Fleet caused the sweetest sensation of my life. The Officers who came on board to welcome my return, forgot my rank as Commander-in-Chief in the enthusiasm with which they greeted me. As soon as these emotions were past, I laid before them the Plan I had previously arranged for attacking the enemy ; and it was not only my pleasure to find it generally approved, but clearly perceived and understood. . . . When I came to explain to them the '*Nelson touch*,' it was like an electric shock. Some shed tears, all approved — ' It was new—it was singular—it was simple ! ' ; and, from Admirals downwards, it was repeated — ' It must succeed if ever they will allow us to get at them ! ' "

The enthusiasm of Nelson's greeting, however, was not due entirely to his reputation as a tactician, but rather to his reputation as a human being. Collingwood was over-cautious about letting the ships buy fresh fruit and vegetables brought daily in local craft from the coast of

Africa. But when Nelson arrived this was changed. Nevertheless the problem of how to defeat the enemy was his main concern, and his plan, which he communicated freely to his officers, was really twofold, since the enemy had first to be lured out of port and then defeated tactically.

Nelson proposed to lure the Combined Fleet out by starving them of supplies and at the same time concealing his own strength. The starving process involved the blockade, not only of Cadiz, but of the whole adjacent coast, and was distasteful to the British Cabinet, since it involved trouble with neutrals. Nevertheless, Nelson carried it out. In order to conceal his strength he withdrew his battle fleet to a position fifty to sixty miles west of Cadiz, keeping only four of the line, and the frigates within sight of the coast. Luckily events played straight into his hands, for Bonaparte, hearing that another expedition of troops was preparing in England, under General Baird, and fearing that they were destined to join Craig at Naples, ordered Villeneuve to leave Cadiz and to enter the Mediterranean. Actually, Baird was destined for the Cape of Good Hope. Meanwhile Bonaparte had abandoned his invasion scheme, broken up his camp at Boulogne and was preparing to march against Austria.

Nelson explained the tactical side of his plan in the famous Memorandum which he issued on 9th October. Expecting to have forty ships himself and crediting Villeneuve with forty-six, he proposed to divide his own fleet into two squadrons of sixteen each, under himself and Collingwood, and to have an advance squadron of eight fast two-deckers. Collingwood was to cut off the

twelve rear ships of the enemy with his own sixteen, and crush them by superior concentration of fire. Nelson assigned to himself the rôle of preventing Collingwood from being interfered with, and proposed to accomplish this by cutting through the centre of the enemy's line and isolating and capturing their Commander-in-Chief. The advance squadron was to cut through just ahead of the enemy's centre and so increase their discomfiture. Nelson assumed that twenty of the enemy's leading ships would still be unengaged and that in order to take part in the battle they would try to come round either by tacking to windward or by wearing to leeward. In either case the British must be prepared to place some of their own ships between the new arrivals and the general mêlée, and Nelson looked "with confidence to a victory before the van of the enemy could succour their rear." Finally, "in case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood, no captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy."

Nelson apparently assumed that the Combined Fleet would be poorly handled and that their gunnery would be bad. He sought to reduce the danger of being smashed to pieces during the usual stately advance by ordering that the enemy should be approached under the fullest sail possible with safety to the masts. His assumptions of superiority over the enemy were certainly justified, largely as a result of St. Vincent's work at the Admiralty, where he had insisted that qualifications and previous performances should govern the *promotion* of lieutenants to captain and the *employment* of captains *automatically* promoted to

admiral, rather than influence and seniority as heretofore.

Nelson possessed many advantages over all his distinguished predecessors. Though he had seen more service than most officers afloat, he was still in the prime of life. He commanded a body of officers inspired by the highest sense of *esprit de corps*, many of them with long fighting experience. Finally, he had brought with him from England a new and enlarged edition of the vocabulary signalling code only recently invented by Admiral Sir Home Popham, and was thus able to control the movements of his fleet with a new exactitude. The French Navy, on the other hand, had never really recovered from the disorganisation caused by the Revolution, while the Spanish Navy was notoriously inefficient. Rodney had beaten the French and Spaniards in his old age, with quarrelsome captains and clumsy signals. Nelson, with every advantage on his side, was determined to annihilate them. But for this a substantial number of ships was necessary, and on 18th October he only had twenty-seven of the line off Cadiz. He had even allowed Calder to go home to stand his trial in his three-decker *Prince of Wales* entirely out of a sense of delicacy to a fallen rival, while Rear-Admiral Louis had been sent to Gibraltar for water and provisions with six more of the line. Villeneuve, who was soon informed of Louis' presence at the Straits, decided that this was his best chance, and at 6 a.m. on the morning of 19th October the *Sirius* frigate signalled "Enemy have their topsail yards hoisted," followed by "Enemy ships are coming out of port." As soon as these signals reached the *Victory*,

Nelson led his battle fleet south-east, with the intention of closing the enemy and at the same time of cutting them off from the Straits.

"My dearest, beloved Emma," he wrote, "the dearest friend of my bosom, the signal has been made that the Enemy's combined Fleet is coming out of port. . . . May the God of Battles crown my endeavours with success; at all events I will take care that my name shall ever be most dear to you and Horatia, both of whom I love as much as my own life; and as my last writing before the battle will be to you, so I hope in God that I shall live to finish my letter after the Battle." Next morning, 20th October, he was at the entrance to the Straits, but the enemy were reported to the north, and Nelson turned back towards them. During that night he was informed by signal guns and flares of every movement which they made, and at daybreak on Monday, 21st October, he saw them from the *Victory* for the first time since war was declared in 1803. They were steering south in line ahead with a *corps de bataille* of twenty-one of the line, under Villeneuve, and an advance squadron of twelve, under Gravina. Villeneuve had reckoned Nelson's strength at only twenty-one, and therefore hoped to engage him ship for ship, using Gravina's squadron for the decisive blow.

Nelson's fleet lay about ten miles due west of them and to windward, there being a light breeze from the north-west; and at 6 a.m. he made the signal to steer E.N.E. towards the enemy, having previously signalled for the "order of sailing" in two columns. He then retired to his cabin and wrote in his diary: "May the

great God, Whom I worship, grant to my Country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious Victory ; and may no misconduct in anyone tarnish it ; and may humanity after Victory be the predominant feature in the British Fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him Who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my Country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen. Amen. Amen." He then asked Hardy, his flag captain, and Blackwood, who had come on board from the *Euryalus*, to be witnesses to a special codicil to his will, dated 21st October. In it he recounted various services which Emma had done to the British cause while at Naples, and concluded : "I leave Emma Lady Hamilton, therefore, a Legacy to my King and Country, that they will give her an ample provision to maintain her Rank of Life. I also leave to the beneficence of my Country my adopted daughter, Horatia Nelson Thompson [sic] ; and I desire she will use in future the name of Nelson only. These are the only favours I ask of my King and Country at this moment when I am going to fight their Battle."

By now Villeneuve could see that Nelson had twenty-seven of the line, and therefore signalled to Gravina to rejoin the main body. Fearing an attack on his rear and wishing to bring the shoals off Cape Trafalgar under his lee, he also signalled his fleet to "wear together"—that is, to turn about, away from the wind—and sail north. Nelson thinking that the enemy were in flight, pressed on with every stitch of canvas,

including the studding sails, which had to be set on extra yards pulled out laterally from the ordinary yards on each side of the ship. Having only twenty-seven of the line, he had abandoned the advance squadron and had given Collingwood fifteen ships and had kept twelve for himself. Otherwise his plan remained the same as in the Memorandum.

Villeneuve meanwhile was in difficulty ; “the extreme lightness of the wind, the unskilfulness of the officers, and the want of training and seamanship in his ships’ companies rendered the manœuvre [of wearing round] very long.” In the end his line became curved, with a sag in the middle to leeward, and so irregular that in many places it was duplicated. Nevertheless he seemed determined to fight and hove-to waiting Nelson’s attack. “They put a good face on it,” Nelson remarked to Blackwood ; “but,” he added, “I’ll give them such a dressing as they never had before.” The “order of sailing” set Nelson and Collingwood at the head of their respective lines, but neither seemed inclined to drop back into the second or third place for the “order of battle.” On the contrary, Nelson made a general signal for ships to take station as most convenient, and continued to forge ahead, while Collingwood in the newly refitted *Royal Sovereign* increased his lead on his own column, which he signalled to attach diagonally in “line of bearing.”

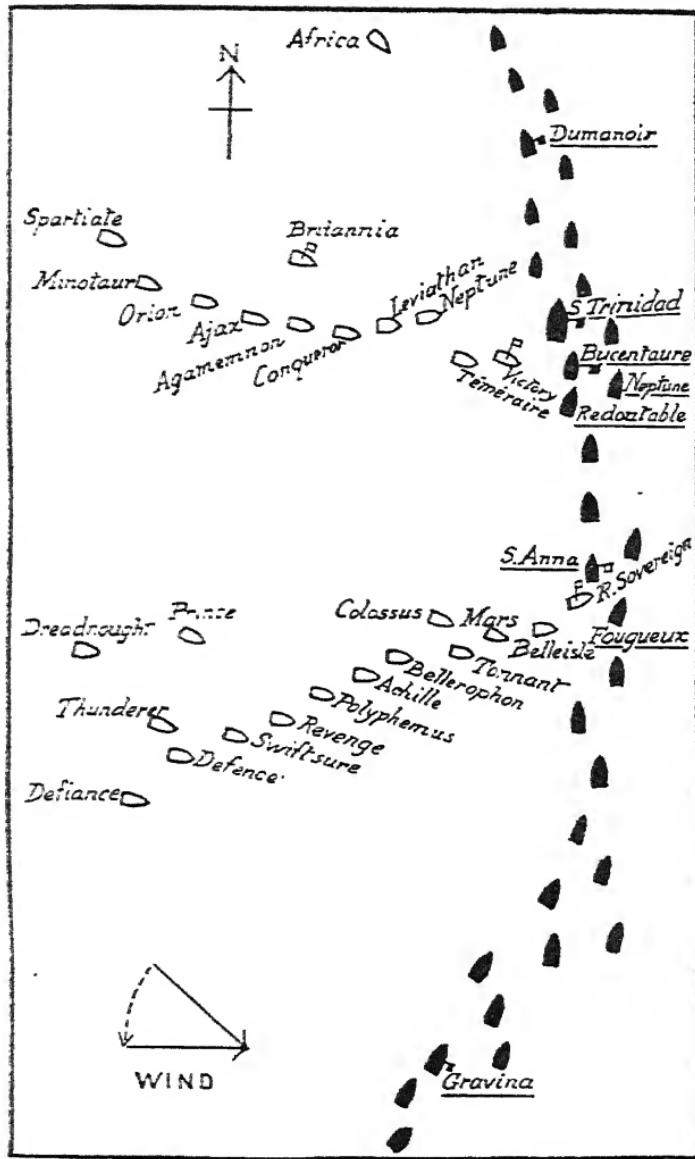
Meanwhile Nelson held on in line ahead, telling Blackwood that he intended to cut through a gap in the enemy’s line “and then to run up the van and engage it from the leeward, crippling each

unit as he passed with his massed three-deckers, and leaving them a prey to his weaker following."<sup>1</sup> This was a last-minute change of plan born of an overpowering desire to get between the enemy and Cadiz.

So far the Combined Fleet had shown no admirals' flags and it was difficult to guess the position of their Commander-in-Chief, especially now that Gravina's squadron had joined the main body. Nelson therefore steered for the *Santissima Trinidad*, the largest warship afloat, easily recognisable by her towering hull, and now tenth in the enemy's line. At 11.30 the enemy opened fire on the *Royal Sovereign* and simultaneously the flag officers disclosed themselves, Villeneuve being shown to be in the *Bucentaure*, eleventh in their line. Nelson at once altered course to pass between her and the *S. Trinidad* and signalled "Make all sail possible with safety to the masts." Even so, the speed of his fleet scarcely exceeded three knots, though they surged along with their studding sails stretched wide on either side, their great spread of canvas shining in the sun like butterflies' wings.

It was at this moment that Nelson made the signal, "England expects that every man will do his duty," the significance of which has so often been missed. As in the Baltic, the emphasis was neither upon "England" nor "duty," but upon "every man," of whose existence Nelson was never forgetful. Scarcely was the first of the twelve "hoists" of the signal run up than the enemy opened fire on the *Victory* with ranging shots. In a few minutes they hit the sails and

<sup>1</sup> Sir Julian Corbett, *The Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 384.



TRAfalgar, 21st OCT., 1805; THE APPROACH

then let loose whole broadsides. The wind was so light that despite her sails, she still moved slowly, and meanwhile received the concentrated fire of nine enemy ships. Her main-topmast crashed over the side with a tangle of sails and rigging and fifty of her crew were killed or wounded. Had the enemy been better experienced she might have been a wreck in ten minutes.

Villeneuve now made sail in the *Bucentaure* and closed the gap between himself and the *Santissima Trinidad*, so that Nelson was forced to take the *Victory* to starboard in the hopes of cutting through under the *Bucentaure's* stern. Captain Lucas, however, commanding the *Redoutable*, next astern the *Bucentaure*, saw the danger and made sail to close the next gap. It was now or never and at 12.30 the *Victory* smashed through between the stern of the *Bucentaure* and the bows of the *Redoutable*, raking each of them from end to end, with double and treble-shotted guns, fired at a range of a few feet exactly as the target came level. The *Redoutable* lost 400 men from this first terrible broadside and was driven to leeward by the impact with the *Victory's* hull, the two ships remaining locked together for some considerable time.

Captain Lucas determined to take the *Victory* by boarding. He ceased fire with his lower-deck guns, ordered the gun ports to be closed and held the gun crews ready as boarders, while he prepared the way for them by opening a heavy covering fire of musketry and grenades on the *Victory's* upper-works from his own tops and upper works. The range was point blank and the tops swarming with men, so that in a few minutes

the *Victory*'s poop, quarter-deck and forecastle were being swept with fire. The *Victory*'s boatswain replied by turning the sixty-eight-pounder "carronade" on the assembled boarders, firing solid shot plus kegs of 400 musket-balls into them, but even this did nothing to check the fire from the *Redoutable*'s tops.

In those days there was no armoured cover for senior officers, and by the custom of the service Nelson and Hardy continued to pace the quarter-deck as if on parade. Although Nelson did not wear the actual four stars of the orders with which he was invested, he wore exact replicas of them, executed in thread and bullion. Being obviously an officer of high rank, he was an attractive target, and at 1.15 p.m. he was hit by a musket-ball fired from the *Redoutable*'s mizzen-top at a range of scarcely forty feet. He was quickly carried below, the ball having struck his left epaulette, passed through his shoulder, broken two ribs, passed through his lung, severed a branch of the pulmonary artery and broken his backbone in two places. In the cockpit below the water-line, the Surgeon, William Beatty, with two assistants, was doing his best for the wounded by dim lantern-light. Nelson knew that his back was broken and told Beatty to attend to those who could still be saved. He was already feeling the effects of internal haemorrhage and knew that he could not long survive. Captain Lucas now lowered his mainyard till it touched the *Victory*'s upper works. He was about to send his boarders across it as a bridge when Captain Harvey's *Téméraire* appeared on the *Redoutable*'s starboard quarter. Harvey fired a broadside,

and the mass of boarders crowded on the *Redoutable*'s quarter-deck and forecastle were swept away. The *Victory*'s gunners meanwhile kept up a steady fire, the guns on the lower decking actually touching the *Redoutable*'s side, the gunners being ordered to throw a bucketful of water at the enemy's hull after each shot to prevent a fire which would have soon proved fatal to both.

By two o'clock the *Redoutable* was a wreck and had surrendered to the *Téméraire*, which also captured the *Fougueux*. The British *Neptune*<sup>1</sup>, also broke the enemy's line and attacked the *Santissima Trinidad*, but the other ships in Nelson's column "surged up against the enemy's clubbed formation" and, like Collingwood's column, "scrambled into battle" as well and as quickly as they could. Nevertheless the leading ships had covered the advance to such purpose that the enemy's centre and rear were being gradually mastered, several of them having already surrendered.

So far the enemy's van of ten ships had not been engaged, but at 2.30 Admiral Dumanoir, their commander, signalled them to tack. The wind was so light that they were forced to lower their boats and tow. Four decided to wear in-

<sup>1</sup> Ships' names are often confusing. Certain names, particularly classical ones, were used by all European navies alike, hence the three *Neptunes* at Trafalgar, British, French and Spanish. Moreover, in the days when more ships were captured than sunk the prizes generally continued to bear their original names though in foreign hands. Thus the French *Spartiate* and *Tonnant* captured at the Nile were in the British fleet at Trafalgar (see diagrams). This custom, however, did not prevent the same name being given to a new ship built by the original owners of the prize, hence the British and French *Achille* and the British and French *Swiftsure* at Trafalgar.

stead, and effected little ; one ran straight into the mêlée and was soon held up and overwhelmed. Five, under Dumanoir himself, tacked properly and came down the windward side of the action. The crisis of the battle had now come, for these five ships alone might have turned the scale when captors lay grappled to their prizes in a grim, dismasted tangle and Nelson was dying. The issue now lay with his subordinates. Collingwood, Hardy and Lord Northesk did not possess Nelson's genius, but they knew their job. They saw Dumanoir coming and hastily brought guns to bear. Luckily, however, the two sternmost ships of Nelson's column, the *Spartiate* and *Minotaur*, were only just coming into action, and were able to rake Dumanoir's five with their broadsides, capturing one and forcing the other four to turn away. Nelson's plan had succeeded ; eighteen of the enemy had surrendered and the remainder were retiring to Cadiz under Gravina, himself mortally wounded. One other enemy flag officer died of wounds ; and three, including Villeneuve, were already prisoners.

From the *Victory*'s cockpit Nelson still strove to control the battle, and vehemently gave orders to Hardy that the fleet and its prizes should anchor to ride out the approaching gale. He spoke again and again of Emma and Horatia, and kept repeating, "Thank God, I have done my duty." Thomas Atkinson, master of the *Victory*, wrote in the log : "Partial firing continued until 4.30 when a victory having been reported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, K.B. and Commander-in-Chief, he then died of his wound."

Nelson possessed the attributes of genius which

the sea nourished and which neither tradition nor discipline could entirely tame. He was only forty-seven when he died, and over twenty years of his life were spent at sea. Those who plough the sea for many years together embrace a world which is both very great and very small, a world which stretches from horizon to horizon, but also from bow to stern, a world in which the will to prevail is exalted to the uttermost. Nelson attempted to carry everything with a high hand, both in love and war. In war he was successful, but his love was hindered in its expression by unyielding obstacles and was only partly satisfied.

Nelson's genius was never tamed. Drive and originality, its two most distinguishing attributes, became more effective in him as time went on, till culminating in Trafalgar they produced the final triumph of naval tactics under sail. With this drive and originality, however, went also depression, pettiness, ill-tempered explosions and fearful tensions, characteristic of genius. But he was loved because he was also radiantly kind and humble.

In the confusion following the battle, several prizes escaped, or were recaptured by a sortie from Cadiz. This, however, led to still further captures by the British. In addition, Sir Richard Strachan captured Dumanoir and four of his ships off Cape Ortegal. Meanwhile the threatened gale came, but Collingwood decided not to anchor, and no British ships were lost. Nevertheless, fourteen enemy ships sank or were burnt or scuttled, and only eight prizes survived.

Nelson's body, preserved in spirits, was brought to England in the *Victory* and lay in state at

Greenwich, in the Painted Hall of the Royal Hospital. From there it was taken by water to the Admiralty, and on 9th January, 1806, was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral after a procession and state funeral of unexampled solemnity and magnificence. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence were present, accompanied by Peers, Admirals and City dignitaries. There were Kings-at-Arms, Heralds, Pursuivants, Yeomen of the Guard, detachments of cavalry and grenadiers, and the Ship's Company of the *Victory*. The funeral car was shaped to represent the *Victory*'s bow and stern.

Nelson's brother William, the parson, succeeded to the peerage, which was raised to an Earldom. He also received £10,000 with which to buy an estate and a pension of £5,000 a year was attached to the peerage in perpetuity, though this has now been abolished. William's only surviving child, Charlotte Mary, became Duchess of Brontë and married the second Lord Bridport. The Nelson Earldom passed to Nelson's nephew, Thomas Bolton, grandfather of the present Earl. Nelson's sisters and niece received £30,000 between them,

Fanny received a pension of £2,000 a year and died in 1831. Josiah retired as a Captain and died in 1830.

Horatia married the Rev. Philip Ward and lived till 1881. Their present-day descendants are the family of Nelson-Ward. Emma received no money or recognition of any kind, and was soon in difficulties. She died at Calais in 1815, a bankrupt exile, abandoned by all.

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